







# THE PRINCETON SEMINARY BULLETIN

VOLUME XVIII NUMBER 2 NEW SERIES 1997

## STONE LECTURE

Glossolalia and the Embarrassments of Experience

LUKE TIMOTHY JOHNSON

## NEUMANN LECTURE

The Real Jesus of the Sayings Gospel Q

JAMES M. ROBINSON

Barren Rock, Central Plains, Island across the Strait:

The Hong Kong-Mainland China-Taiwan Connection

PETER K. H. LEE

Reflections on Human Cloning

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## SERMONS

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# Glossolalia and the Embarrassments of Experience

by LUKE TIMOTHY JOHNSON

*Luke Timothy Johnson, the Robert W. Woodruff Professor of New Testament and Christian Origins at Candler School of Theology, Emory University, is the author of numerous books, including The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels. This address, the fifth of his Stone Lectures, was delivered on Wednesday, February 12, 1997, in the Main Lounge of the Mackay Campus Center.*

EVEN AT Pentecost, speaking in tongues divided the crowd.<sup>1</sup> Since then, glossolalia has been a phenomenon that has been singled out as either the supreme criterion for the direct action of the Holy Spirit in Christian lives<sup>2</sup> or the supreme example of how enthusiasm is a bad thing for Christian piety.<sup>3</sup> Opinions vary concerning the authenticity of tongues as a religious experience or as the expression of religious experience,<sup>4</sup> but no one denies that for some Christians it is the experience most highly prized, the palpable sign that their life has been taken over by the power of God.<sup>5</sup> What is more, such

<sup>1</sup> Even those who were positively impressed "were astonished and confused, asking each other what this meant" (Acts 2:12). The negative reaction resembles that repeated through the ages, "But others mockingly declared that they were filled with new wine" (Acts 2:13). For translation and discussion, see L.T. Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992), 41-47.

<sup>2</sup> For example, E. J. Lawless, *Handmaidens of the Lord: Pentecostal Women Preachers and Traditional Religion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), esp. 7, 23, 59-65, 99-101; Y.A. Obaje, *The Miracle of Speaking in Tongues: Which Side Are You?* (Nigeria: Abedayo Calvary Printers, 1987), 26-37; C. Garrett, *Spirit Possession and Popular Religion from the Camisards to the Shakers* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).

<sup>3</sup> In his classic study, R.A. Knox shows how glossolalia figures in some but not all manifestations of that religious impulse he calls *Enthusiasm: A Chapter in the History of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), 360-66, 380, 549-59, 564; despite his basically positive appreciation, M.T. Kelsey, in *Speaking with Tongues: An Experiment in Spiritual Experience* (London: Epworth, 1964), begins by noting the way tongues create controversy in churches (5-8).

<sup>4</sup> See M. Heyd, "Be Sober and Reasonable": *The Critique of Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), 31-38, 51-64, 80-98, 239, for the way in which glossolalia was reduced either to a medical cause (melancholia) or the influence of demons. The general idea can be gained from the title of the work by M. Casaubon, *A Treatise Concerning Enthusiasm as It is an Effect of Nature: but is Mistaken by Many for Either Divine Inspiration or Diabolical Possession*, 2d ed. (London: Roger Daniel, 1656); similarly, J. Foster, *Natural History of Enthusiasm*, 7th ed. (London: Holdsworth & Ball, 1834).

<sup>5</sup> See Kelsey, *Speaking with Tongues*, 17, 78; E.G. Hinson, "The Significance of Glossolalia in the History of Christianity," in *Speaking in Tongues: Let's Talk about It*, ed. W.E. Mills (Waco: Word, 1973), 61-80; R. Laurentin, *Catholic Pentecostalism* (New York: Doubleday, 1977); and L.N. Jones, "The Black Pentecostals," in *The Charismatic Movement*, ed. M.P. Hamilton (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 145-58.

Christians claim that this experience is precisely the same as that reported in the New Testament of the first believers.<sup>6</sup> If present-day Christians have exactly the same experience of God, it is patent that their Christianity above all must be regarded as authentically continuous with that of earliest Christianity.<sup>7</sup> The present-day prevalence of this practice, and the claims that continue to be made for it, make the study of glossolalia of particular pertinence for any examination of religious experience in earliest Christianity.<sup>8</sup>

## I. NATURE OF THE PHENOMENON

Determining the character of glossolalia is not easy.<sup>9</sup> The New Testament evidence is sparse and inconsistent.<sup>10</sup> In Acts, tongues are treated as real languages—Galileans speak “other tongues” (Acts 2:6-8)—and as a form of prophecy (Acts 2:16-18). In contrast, Paul emphasizes the unintelligibility of tongues (1 Cor. 14:6-11) and explicitly contrasts this activity from that of prophecy (1 Cor. 14:3-5).

The conflicts in our sources raise a number of questions. Should we assume that tongues takes a single consistent form? If so, then we might want to value one source more than another. Paul’s report, for example, might be taken as that of a firsthand observer—indeed participant (see 1 Cor. 14:18)—and therefore as more reliable. Acts correspondingly might be viewed as a narrative interpretation that camouflages the “real” phenomenon. Or should we begin with the assumption that even in the New Testament period

<sup>6</sup> See W.G. MacDonald, “The Place of Glossolalia in Neo-Pentecostalism,” in *Speaking in Tongues: Let’s Talk about It*, ed. Mills, 81-93.

<sup>7</sup> See C.G. Williams, *Tongues of the Spirit: A Study of Pentecostal Glossolalia and Related Phenomena* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1981), 73.

<sup>8</sup> The literature on glossolalia grew enormously under the impetus of the “Charismatic Movement” or “Pentecostal Movement” both within Protestantism and Catholicism in the 1960s and 1970s; for a helpful collection of articles, see W.E. Mills, ed., *Speaking in Tongues: A Guide to Research in Glossolalia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), especially his full bibliography on pp. 493-528.

<sup>9</sup> The term glossolalia derives from *glōssais lalein* (see 1 Cor. 14:6). The Greek word *glōssa*, which otherwise in the New Testament refers to the physical tongue (Luke 16:24), ordinary speech (1 John 3:18), or human language (Rev. 5:9), is used in some passages for ecstatic utterance associated with possession by the Holy Spirit (see Mark 16:17; Acts 2:3, 4, 11; 10:46; 19:6; 1 Corinthians 12-14). See J. Behm, “*glōssa*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-76), 1:719-27; and R.A. Harrisville, “Speaking in Tongues: A Lexicographical Study,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 38 (1976): 35-48.

<sup>10</sup> For surveys of the pertinent texts, see F.W. Beare, “Speaking with Tongues: A Critical Survey of the New Testament Evidence,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 83 (1964): 229-46; and W.G. MacDonald, “Glossolalia in the New Testament,” *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society* 7 (1964): 59-68.



glossolalia took several forms?<sup>11</sup> If so, then Paul and Acts might witness to a diversity of practice as well as of interpretation.

Another decision concerns what evidence counts in determining the nature of glossolalia in earliest Christianity. What weight should be assigned to similar phenomena in early Hebrew prophecy or Hellenistic mantic prophecy? Or how seriously should the experiences of contemporary glossolalists be taken, together with the claim that their experience represents the same "gift of the Holy Spirit" as that mentioned by Paul (1 Cor. 12:10)?<sup>12</sup> Can the extensive studies of contemporary practice carried out by linguists, ethnographers, and psychologists validly be employed to explicate the New Testament phenomenon?

Unfortunately, research into contemporary glossolalia is divided on such critical issues as whether tongues is a uniform or pluriform phenomenon,<sup>13</sup> whether it is invariably accompanied by or even to be identified with states of psychological dissociation,<sup>14</sup> and whether such parallel speech patterns as those found in shamanism can be considered glossolalic.<sup>15</sup> Concerning antiquity, debate continues on the ecstaticism of the Hebrew prophets and the manifestations of mantic prophecy.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>11</sup> See, e.g., D. Brown, "The Acts of the Apostle, Chapter 2: The Day of Pentecost," *Expositor* 1 (1875): 392-408.

<sup>12</sup> Note J.M. Ford's dismissal of the hypothesis that tongues is ecstatic utterance: "It must be noted that no one who has ever heard the exquisitely beautiful choral singing in tongues at a quiet prayer meeting could ever declare this to be 'bedlam,'" and later, "All these articles appear to speak from the standpoint of persons who have no empirical experience of the phenomenon which they wish to evaluate" ("Towards a Theology of 'Speaking in Tongues,'" *Theological Studies* 32 [1971]: 3-29; reprinted in *Speaking in Tongues: A Guide to Research on Glossolalia*, ed. Mills, 268, 270). Likewise, Kelsey dismisses the work of a scholar on the grounds of unfamiliarity with the contemporary phenomenon (*Speaking with Tongues*, 144). It is fascinating that some of the same scholars who insist that tongues is absolutely unique to Christianity in antiquity and cannot be compared with Greco-Roman phenomena (e.g., Kelsey, *Speaking with Tongues*, 141) also assume that the contemporary phenomenon can, without more ado, be taken as equivalent to that addressed by Paul.

<sup>13</sup> See W.J. Samarin, *Tongues of Men and Angels: The Religious Language of Pentecostalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 129-49.

<sup>14</sup> F. Goodman, *Speaking in Tongues: A Cross-Cultural Study of Glossolalia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 124; Kelsey, *Speaking with Tongues*, 142; H.N. Maloney and A.A. Lovekin, *Glossolalia: Behavioral Science Perspectives on Speaking in Tongues* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 112. Maloney and Lovekin provide a valuable survey and include a rich bibliography (263-79); see also J.P. Kildahl, "Psychological Observations," in *The Charismatic Movement*, ed. M.P. Harrington (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 124-42; and V.H. Hine, "Pentecostal Glossolalia: Toward a Functional Interpretation," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 8 (1965): 161-64.

<sup>15</sup> See M. Eliade, *Le Chamanisme et les Techniques archaïques de l'Ecstase* (Paris: Payot, 1951), 98-102; and L. Carlyle May, "A Survey of Glossolalia and Related Phenomena in Non-Christian Religions," *American Anthropologist* 58 (1956): 75-96.

<sup>16</sup> C.G. Williams, "Ecstaticism in Hebrew Prophecy and Christian Glossolalia," *Studies in Religion* 3 (1974): 328-38; D. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient*

Given this range of uncertainty, any definition of glossolalia in the New Testament must remain tentative, avoiding such easy characterizations as that expressed by the *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* a generation ago, "The psychological aspects are patent."<sup>17</sup> Patience and discipline are particularly required in a phenomenological analysis of tongues. Neither a reductionistic assumption that tongues is attributable to charlatanism or self-delusion nor an apologetic assumption that tongues is a direct result of divine inspiration helps us understand the experience. Like any religious activity, glossolalia can be sincere or phoney (or a complex mixture of both); like other religious experiences, it can involve human and transcendental causes simultaneously.<sup>18</sup>

Scholars have generally worked with the hypothesis that glossolalia is a single phenomenon and have offered two standard definitions.<sup>19</sup> The first has it that tongues is the divinely inspired ability to speak actual but untaught human languages, a skill technically known as *xenoglossia*.<sup>20</sup> In this understanding, the report in Acts 2:4-11 is determinative. The disciples receiving the Holy Spirit speak "other languages" that are understood by visitors from the diaspora who happen to speak those languages. Appeal is also made to Mark 16:17, which refers to "new tongues" (or "languages") as a sign that will accompany disciples. Some aspects of Paul's discussion in 1 Corinthians 14 are also isolated to support this hypothesis, for example, his comparison of tongues to known human languages of the earth (vv. 10-11).<sup>21</sup> Most of all,

*Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 36-48; J.T. Bunn, "Glossolalia in Historical Perspective," in *Speaking in Tongues: Let's Talk about It*, ed. Mills, 36-47.

<sup>17</sup> E. Andrews, "Tongues, Gift of," *Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. G.A. Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 4:672.

<sup>18</sup> See Maloney and Lovekin, *Glossolalia*, 249-51.

<sup>19</sup> A third, rather odd, hypothesis is that tongues is, literally, a heavenly language. The basis of this position, which is folkloric rather than scientific, is Paul's phrase "If I speak with the tongues of angels" in 1 Cor. 13:1, his references to revealing mysteries (1 Cor. 14:2) and speaking with God (1 Cor. 14:28), and his cryptic allusion in 2 Cor. 12:4 to heavenly visions that he is incapable of expressing in human speech. Paul's characterization has something in common with the ecstatic speech in the *Testament of Job* 48:1-50:3. The obvious problem with the hypothesis is that it is unhelpful for determining the linguistic or psychological dimensions of speech as it was practiced by early Christians; for a discussion of the texts, see S.D. Currie, "Speaking in Tongues: Early Evidence Outside the New Testament Bearing on *Glossais Lalein*," *Interpretation* 19 (1965):274-94.

<sup>20</sup> May, "A Survey of Glossolalia and Related Phenomena," 63-68; see also I. Stevenson, *Xenoglossy: A Review and Report of a Case* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1974); and idem, *Unlearned Language: New Studies in Xenoglossy* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1984).

<sup>21</sup> See T.W. Harpur, "The Gift of Tongues and Interpretation," *Canadian Journal of Theology* 12 (1966): 164-71; and R.H. Gundry, "'Ecstatic Utterance' (NEB)," *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s., 17 (1966): 306. This is the position advocated as well by J.M. Ford, "Toward a Theology of 'Speaking in Tongues'"; and C. Forbes, "Early Christian Inspired Speech and Hellenistic Popular Religion," *Novum Testamentum* 28 (1986): 257-70.

Paul lists with "tongues" another spiritual gift called "interpretation of tongues" (*hermēneia glōssōn*, 1 Cor. 12:10). In light of 1 Corinthians 14:13 and especially 14:27-28, such interpretation is taken to mean "translating from a real but unknown language into another real but known language."<sup>22</sup> Modern glossolalists chime in with the evidence that their ecstatic speech is in fact a language unknown to them. A substantial oral tradition has it that such languages are spontaneously recognized by visitors from foreign climes who recognize in these utterances languages they themselves speak.<sup>23</sup>

The weight of textual evidence, however, does not support this understanding of tongues as real human languages. The Pentecost story does emphasize the intelligibility of the tongues spoken, but a careful reading indicates that the miracles occurred in the *hearing* rather than in the *mode of speaking*. The bystanders do not ask, "How can they all be speaking our native languages?" but rather, "Since all who are speaking are Galileans, how is it that *we hear them* in our own native languages?" (Acts 2:8).<sup>24</sup> The other references to tongues in Acts stress their source rather than their intelligibility. The isolation of Pentecost in this respect suggests that the element of communication was emphasized by Luke to suit his narrative purposes at that point in his story.<sup>25</sup>

The mention of "new tongues" in Mark 16:17 is too obscure to provide help in defining the nature of the phenomenon. The "longer ending" of Mark, in which it occurs, is certainly a later addition to the Gospel and indebted to other traditions, such as those found in Acts and Paul.<sup>26</sup> At best, the phrase provides another witness to the practice of tongues among early Christians. As for Paul, he could hardly emphasize more strongly that in his view—and he *was* a speaker in tongues himself (14:18)—glossolalia is an

<sup>22</sup> J.G. Davies, "Pentecost and Glossolalia," *The Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s., 3 (1952): 231.

<sup>23</sup> W.J. Samarin, "The Linguisticity of Glossolalia," *Hartford Quarterly* 8 (1968): 55-57. For examples of such reports, see J.L. Sherrill, *They Speak with Other Tongues* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 98-107; and Kelsey, *Speaking with Tongues*, 160-63.

<sup>24</sup> For the contrary view, see R.O.P. Taylor, "The Tongues at Pentecost," *Expository Times* 40 (1928-29): 300-3; and A. Beel, "Donum Linguarum juxta Act.Apost. ii. 1-13," *Collationes Brugenses* 35 (1935): 417-20. But the divided response of the crowd is decisive: Not all *there* heard in the same manner; some concluded from the apparently incoherent character of their raving that the speakers were in fact drunk (2:13). Peter's "interpretation," furthermore, was not of their discourse but of their ecstatic condition; see Johnson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 53-54.

<sup>25</sup> See Johnson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 45-47.

<sup>26</sup> The manuscript support for "new" (*kainais*) in the phrase "they will speak with [new] tongues" (*lalēsousin kainais glōssais*) in Mark 16:17, furthermore, is even weaker than for the passage as a whole. For a discussion of the longer endings of Mark and variants, see B.M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London: United Bible Societies, 1975), 122-28.

intrinsically noncommunicative form of utterance (1 Cor. 13:1; 14:2, 4, 7-9, 16-17, 23). What, then, does he mean by "interpretation of tongues?" A recent study of the use of the verb *diर्मēneuein* by Paul's Jewish contemporaries Josephus and Philo suggests that it often means simply "to put into words" or "to bring to articulate expression."<sup>27</sup> When Paul tells the tongue-speaker to pray that he or she might "interpret" (1 Cor. 14:13), he does not therefore mean "provide a translation," but "change to a mode of speech intelligible to the assembly."

The purported evidence offered by contemporary glossolalists that their utterance is real language, finally, is spurious. Careful linguistic study has demonstrated that glossolalia is not a "real but unknown language" but rather a "language-like patterning" of sound.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, observation of the "interpretation of tongues" in actual Pentecostal practice shows that it is not the translation of a language, which would require some coincidence of sound segment, but a separate utterance altogether, often lengthier by far than the glossolalic segment.<sup>29</sup> The stereotypical character of the reports of real languages being heard by native speakers, and the impossibility of verifying such reports, suggest that they are essentially folkloric and legitimizing in character.<sup>30</sup>

The second major hypothesis concerning tongues is that it is not a real language but an ecstatic utterance that takes the form of an ordered babbling.<sup>31</sup> Paul clearly regards tongues as unintelligible, contrasting speech that is "in the Spirit" (*en τῷ πνευματί*) but does not use the mind (*nous*) with speech that does use the mind and therefore builds up the community (1 Cor. 14:14-15, 19). Because glossolalia is private and noncommunicative, God may be praised by it and the person praying may be edified, but neither the mind nor the community gains any benefit from the performance (1 Cor. 14:2-3, 14, 17, 28).

This definition of glossolalia also better corresponds with most ancient and contemporary parallel phenomena. In at least the older forms of Israelite prophecy, there is evidence of inspiration by God's Spirit, trance-like states

<sup>27</sup> See A.C. Thiselton, "The 'Interpretation' of Tongues: A New Suggestion in the Light of Greek Usage in Philo and Josephus," *The Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s., 30 (1979): 15-36.

<sup>28</sup> Samarín, *Tongues of Men and Angels*, 74-128; Maloney and Lovekin, *Glossolalia*, 38; Kildahl, "Psychological Observations," 362.

<sup>29</sup> See the example provided by Maloney and Lovekin, *Glossolalia*, 32.

<sup>30</sup> See D. Christie-Murray, *Voices from the Gods: Speaking with Tongues* (London: R.K. Paul, 1978), 248-52; Stevenson, *Xenoglossy*, 1-14; and May, "A Survey of Glossolalia and Related Phenomena," 68-75.

<sup>31</sup> See, e.g., C.G. Williams, "Glossolalia in the New Testament," in *Tongues of the Spirit*, 25-45.



with the physical indications of dissociation, and the uttering of inarticulate cries (e.g., 1 Sam. 10:5-13; 19:18-24). Whether classical Hebrew prophecy was also accompanied by ecstatic states remains a matter of debate.<sup>32</sup> An important parallel to early Christian glossolalia is the Hellenistic religious phenomenon known as mantic prophecy. In contrast to nonecstatic, "technical" prophecy, such as discerning the auspices or practicing divination,<sup>33</sup> such prophecy involved so complete a possession (*enthysiasmos*) by the divine spirit (*pneuma*) that the mind of the prophet (*mantis*) was inoperative, and the oracles were literally spoken by the god.<sup>34</sup> The prophetic oracles delivered at Delphi played a key role through much of the religious and political life of ancient Greece.<sup>35</sup> Our evidence suggests that such oracles were linguistically intelligible, if obscure in meaning. Even so, they often required "interpretation" by qualified cultic personnel who were called "prophets" (*prophētai*).<sup>36</sup>

Such prophecy was highly esteemed, even by the philosophically sophisticated, as a sign of direct divine involvement with humans.<sup>37</sup> It is not certain, however, how inevitable was the state of trance or ecstasy (*furor*, *mania*) in such prophecy, although it is frequently mentioned.<sup>38</sup> Still less certain is the

<sup>32</sup> See R.R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 21-35.

<sup>33</sup> See Cicero *De Divinatione* 1.18.

<sup>34</sup> For an orientation, see E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 64-101. The classic monograph is E. Fascher, *PROPHETES: Eine sprach- und religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Giessen: A. Töpelmann, 1927); citations to comparative material can be found also in H. Krämer, "prophētēs," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Kittel and Friedrich, 6:784-96; and H. Bacht, "Wahres und Falsches Prophetentum," *Biblica* 32 (1951): 237-62.

<sup>35</sup> For a sense of the cultural importance of Delphi, see Herodotus *Persian Wars* 1.51; 1.61; 1.67; 5.42-43; 5.62-63; 5.91; 6.52; 6.57; 6.66; 6.76; 6.86; 7.220; 7.239; 8.114; 8.141; Thucydides *Peloponnesian War* 2.7-55; 3.11.92; 4.13.118; 5.15.17.

<sup>36</sup> See Plato *Timaeus* 72B; and Herodotus *Persian Wars* 8.135. The picture of ancient prophecy is made even more complex by the traditions concerning the Sibyls, who produced their prophecies in *mania* but did so in clear (and written) prose; see H.A. Parke, *Sibyls and Sibylline Prophecy in Classical Antiquity*, ed. B.C. McGing (London: Routledge, 1988).

<sup>37</sup> See Plato *Ion* 534A-D; *Phaedrus* 244A; *Timaeus* 71E-72B; Plutarch *The E at Delphi* (*Moralia*) 387B, 391E; *The Obsolescence of Oracles* (*Moralia*) 432A-D; *The Oracles at Delphi* (*Moralia*) 399A, 397C. Once more, Philo's language and perceptions concerning prophecy are those of the Greek world: the divine *pneuma* "seizes" humans (*Questions on Genesis* 4.196), "falls on" them (*Life of Moses* 2.291), "possesses" them (*Life of Moses* 1.175), and "fills" their mind (*Questions on Genesis* 4.140). He consistently speaks of the *pneuma*'s replacing the human mind in prophecy (see *Special Laws* 4.49; *Who Is the Heir* 264-265; *Questions on Genesis* 3.9; *Life of Moses* 2.188-192). This is how God "speaks through" the prophets (*Special Laws* 1.65). See M.J. Weaver, *PNEUMA in Philo of Alexandria* (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 1973), 115-41; note in particular the comparison Weaver draws between this language and that used of the Pythian Oracle (131-34).

<sup>38</sup> See, e.g., Plutarch *The Obsolescence of Oracles* (*Moralia*) 417C; Cicero *De Divinatione* 1.32; and Virgil *Aeneid* 6.42ff.

presence of glossolalic utterance.<sup>39</sup> Some references are made to the occurrence of strange sounds and garbled or foreign words,<sup>40</sup> but these tend to be associated with wandering prophets—especially the priests of the goddess Cybele—and soothsayers,<sup>41</sup> or with those attacked as charlatans,<sup>42</sup> rather than with the oracles of the fixed prophetic shrines like Delphi or Dodona. That Paul himself considered tongues as equivalent—at least in manifestation—to such mantic prophecy seems certain from his word choice in 1 Corinthians 14:23, when he suggests that “ignorant and unbelieving” people (that is outsiders) who came across a whole congregation speaking in tongues would conclude, “you are raving” (*boti mainesthe*), which, in context, should be understood as “you are prophesying in the way all cults do, in a frenzy.”<sup>43</sup>

The understanding of glossolalia as a structured babbling, furthermore, corresponds with the best evidence provided by the linguistic analysis of modern tongue speaking,<sup>44</sup> although the degree of ecstasy involved in the contemporary phenomenon is a matter of debate. Problems of definition here are obvious. Some observers virtually define glossolalia in terms of psychological dissociation, considering it to be the oral expression of a trance state.<sup>45</sup> Others point out that the *initial* experience of tongues is often accompanied by dissociation, but that subsequent performances frequently lack any signs of an altered consciousness.<sup>46</sup>

First-person accounts of the experience of glossolalia emphasize, especially with regard to the first occurrence, positive feelings of release, freedom, and joy.<sup>47</sup> Although some modern glossolalia occurs in private,<sup>48</sup> it is ordinarily a public and cultic activity. It is connected above all with the experience of conversion, being “born again” or “baptized in the Holy Spirit” (in explicit continuity with Acts 10:46 and 19:6), and with the practice of prayer (as in 1

<sup>39</sup> See Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 30-35.

<sup>40</sup> See Herodotus *Persian War* 8.135; and Plutarch *The Obsolescence of Oracles (Moralia)* 412A.

<sup>41</sup> See Apuleius *Metamorphoses* 8.27; and Dio Chrysostom *Oration* 10.23-24.

<sup>42</sup> See Lucian *Alexander the False Prophet* 13, 22, 27-28, 49, 51, 53.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Homer *Iliad* 6.131; Euripides *Bacchae* 299; Pausanias *Description of Greece* 2.7.5; Herodotus *Persian War* 4.79; Plato *Phaedrus* 244C. Paul's usage here must be taken, together with his emphasis that tongues does not use the *nous*, as decisive in pointing the phenomenon of glossolalia toward the manifestations of Greco-Roman prophecy. See E. Fascher, *PROPHETES*, 168: “Wenn Paulus 1 Kor 14:23 *mainesthe* von den Glossalalen gebraucht, dann heisst es ‘rasen oder in Verzuchung reden.’”

<sup>44</sup> Samarin, “The Linguisticality of Tongues,” 55-73.

<sup>45</sup> Goodman, *Speaking in Tongues*, 26-34.

<sup>46</sup> Samarin, *Tongues of Men and Angels*, 26-34; Kelsey, *Speaking with Tongues*, 142.

<sup>47</sup> Goodman, *Speaking in Tongues*, 24-57; Kildahl, “Psychological Observations,” 359, 364; Kelsey, *Speaking with Tongues*, 221; Maloney and Lovekind, *Glossolalia*, 185.

<sup>48</sup> See R.A. Hutch, “The Personal Ritual of Glossolalia,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 19 (1980): 255-66.



Cor. 14:2, 28).<sup>49</sup> The understanding of tongues as a form of prophecy (as in Acts 2:4-11) is rarer, as is the actual practice of "the interpretation of tongues."<sup>50</sup>

In summary, the convergence of evidence suggests that glossolalia is a verbal expression of a powerful emotional state. It is not a real language but a kind of structured or ordered babbling. Especially in its first manifestation, it is experienced by the speaker as a positive spiritual empowerment by a spiritual force, an empowerment that provides a sense of liberation and joy. For the individual, glossolalia can be characterized as the linguistic symbol of spiritual release; for a community, the manifestation of tongues is the linguistic expression of a powerful spiritual presence. It is human utterance whose entire significance lies in its directly expressing a certain kind of religious experience.

## II. THE PERVASIVENESS OF THE PHENOMENON

It is impossible to determine how widespread glossolalia was in earliest Christianity. The evidence supports only that tongues were spoken by Paul and some members of the Corinthian congregation in the mid-fifties of the first century<sup>51</sup> and were thought by Luke to have been a feature of some early conversion experiences.<sup>52</sup>

Although Paul lists "tongues" and the "interpretation of tongues" among the spiritual gifts (*charismata*) in 1 Corinthians 12:10, it is noteworthy that neither appears in the two other Pauline lists of spiritual gifts (Rom. 12:3-8;

<sup>49</sup> See Maloney and Lovekin, *Glossolalia*, 126-46.

<sup>50</sup> See, however, May, "A Survey of Glossolalia and Related Phenomena," 68-70; and Maloney and Lovekin, *Glossolalia*, 23-26.

<sup>51</sup> Clement makes no reference to the phenomenon when writing to them some forty years later.

<sup>52</sup> Other evidence sometimes adduced in favor of larger claims is difficult to assess. Apart from the problematic longer ending of Mark (16:17), the gospel tradition has nothing about glossolalia. Indeed, Jesus' condemnation of the "babbling" of gentiles in prayer (Matt. 6:7) could well have been taken by Christians as an implied criticism of glossolalia. Among passages that *could* be used with reference to glossolalia but need not are Paul's mention of "spiritual hymns" by which Christians could praise God "in their hearts" (Col. 3:16; Eph. 4:19), his command to the Thessalonians not to "quench the Spirit" (1 Thess. 4:19), and his claim that the Holy Spirit helps Christians when they do not know how to pray "with unutterable groanings (*stenagmois alalētois*)" (Rom. 8:26). Still more difficult to assess are the traces of early Christian bilingualism. Certainly "Amen" as a response to prayer could scarcely be thought of as an ecstatic utterance (see 1 Cor. 14:16). But what about the Aramaic cry *maranatha* uttered in worship (1 Cor. 16:22) and the Aramaic diminutive *abba*, the proclamation of which is directly connected by Paul to the experience of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 4:6; see Rom. 8:15)? Both words are wonderful candidates for the sort of "ordered babbling" that makes up glossolalia. Unfortunately, we have no way of positively linking these expressions to the practice of tongues.

Eph. 4:11). He makes no mention of the experience of tongues in connection with his own call (Gal. 1:15-17) or in connection with the conversion of others. The case of Galatians 3:1-5 is particularly striking because of Paul's emphasis there on the work of the Spirit and its "powerful deeds." Indeed, we shall see that Paul is deeply ambivalent in his attitude toward tongues. But for that matter, not even Luke connects tongues to Paul's conversion experience (Acts 9:3-8). Nor is tongues linked to the laying on of hands, except in Acts 19:6. Finally, there is no hint of the practice of glossolalia in any other Christian writing before the middle of the second century.

Even for the earliest period of the Christian movement, therefore, glossolalia appears at best as a sporadic and ambiguous phenomenon. Two inferences about that first period are therefore emphatically *not* supported by the evidence: that tongues was a normal and expected accompaniment of the Holy Spirit (and therefore, by implication, a necessary indicator of the authentic presence of the Spirit); and that tongues demonstrates how the first Christians lived in a charismatic fog of trance or dissociation.

### III. EVALUATIONS OF GLOSSOLALIA BY NEW TESTAMENT WRITERS

The discussion of glossolalia is further complicated by the disparate evaluations of the phenomenon in the two New Testament sources that report it. Luke gives a completely positive valuation to glossolalia. As the tongues of fire at Pentecost are the *visual* sign of the Spirit's presence that transforms followers into ministers of the word (see Luke 1:4), so the speaking in tongues is the *auditory* sign. It is the Holy Spirit who "gives them utterance" (Acts 2:4). In the Pentecost account, the first experience of tongues is an expression of praise: the disciples tell "of the great things of God" (2:11).

Peter's speech following this event provides Luke's own interpretation not of the tongues but of the experience of ecstatic utterance itself. He begins by citing Joel 3:1-5 (LXX), indicating thereby that this gift of the Spirit is in fulfillment of prophecy. Moreover, Luke's emendations to the Joel citation have the effect of making this outpouring of the Spirit an eschatological event ("in the last days"), signaled by the Spirit of *prophecy* (see 2:17-18), and by the "signs and wonders" worked by God (2:19).<sup>53</sup> These touches serve to make Pentecost a programmatic statement for the rest of Acts, in which the apostles are depicted as the prophetic successors to Jesus, filled with the same Holy

<sup>53</sup> Johnson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 48-55.

Spirit he was, and working as he did signs and wonders among the people.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, by making the diverse tongues intelligible to Jewish pilgrims from all over the diaspora, Luke indicates that the prophetic Spirit is the fulfillment of the promises to Abraham, extended first to Abraham's descendants and only then to the nations of the earth (2:38-39).<sup>55</sup>

Glossolalia functions as a sign of the Spirit in the two other Acts passages, where it also marks a new stage in the mission. When the Spirit falls on the household of the gentile Cornelius, the Jewish Christians present at the scene can hear the tongues and conclude that the gentiles have received the same Holy Spirit that they had at Pentecost (10:45). Likewise, when Paul lays hands on the former followers of John the Baptist in Ephesus, and they begin "to speak in tongues and prophesy" (19:6), it shows that people in Asia have also received the Holy Spirit and that this baptism in Jesus is greater than John's (19:2-3; see Luke 3:16; Acts 1:5; 11:16). In short, Acts treats glossolalia as an unambiguous symbol of the Spirit's presence and as a sign of the mission's success.<sup>56</sup>

In contrast, Paul's attitude toward glossolalia is more complex and ambivalent, at least in part because of the problems he thinks it is causing in the Corinthian community.<sup>57</sup> The elitist tendencies in that assembly led some of them to regard all spiritual powers (*ta pneumatika*, 1 Cor. 12:1) as a means of self-aggrandizement.<sup>58</sup> Just as some of them used "liberty" and "knowl-

<sup>54</sup> For the notion of "programmatic prophecy" as a literary technique in Luke-Acts, see L.T. Johnson, *Luke* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991), 16; for the depiction of the apostles as prophets in succession to Moses and Jesus, see *ibid.*, 17-20.

<sup>55</sup> Johnson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 47.

<sup>56</sup> While rejecting the historicity of the Cornelius episode in Acts 10:44-48, P.F. Esler argues that, together with the evidence in 1 Corinthians 12-14, it provides genuine historical evidence that speaking in tongues among gentiles functioned as a sign for their admission into the church ("Glossolalia and the Admission of Gentiles into the Early Christian Community," in *The First Christians in Their Social Worlds: Social Scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation* [London: Routledge, 1994], 37-51).

<sup>57</sup> For discussions of Paul's treatment of glossolalia and prophecy in 1 Corinthians 12-14, see L.T. Johnson, "Norms for True and False Prophecy in First Corinthians 12-14," *American Benedictine Review* 22 (1971): 29-45; T. Callan, "Prophecy and Ecstasy in Greco-Roman Religion and in 1 Corinthians," *Novum Testamentum* 27 (1985): 125-40; A.R. Hunt, *The Inspired Body: Paul, the Corinthians, and Divine Inspiration* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1996), 18-30; and T.W. Gillespie, *The First Theologians: A Study in Early Christian Prophecy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 97-164.

<sup>58</sup> D.B. Martin, in "Tongues of Angels and Other Status Indicators," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 59 (1991): 547-89; and *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 87-103, is certainly on target concerning the ways in which the Corinthians themselves were using tongues, although the evidence he adduces for ecstatic speech as a broad cultural status enhancer, while provocative, is not probative. J. Neyrey reads both 1 Cor. 11:2-16 and 14:1-34 in light of Mary Douglas' analysis of societal freedom and control (*Paul in Other Words* [Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1990], 128-35); he also touches briefly on the question of honor and shame (67-68).

edge" in ways careless of community edification (1 Cor. 8:1-2; 10:23), so the spectacular gift of tongues seems to have been claimed by some as a superior "sign of the Spirit." Indeed, some may well have been claiming that only tongues truly certifies a spiritual person: "tongues is a sign for believers" (1 Cor. 14:22).<sup>59</sup>

Paul acknowledged from the start of 1 Corinthians that his readers had been "enriched with all speech and knowledge" (1:5), but when he takes up the issue of tongues explicitly in chapters 12-14, it is to relativize the claims being made for it. He begins by reminding them that there is a difference between *ta pneumatika*, which can refer to any sorts of spiritual phenomena, and *ta charismata*, the term Paul uses for the gifts given by the Holy Spirit (see 1:7; 12:4, 9, 28, 30, 31).<sup>60</sup> He does not deny the reality of *ta pneumatika* but stresses their ambiguity. When the Corinthians were still pagans, such impulses led them away into idolatry (12:1-2).<sup>61</sup> Ecstasy is not self-validating but must be tested by its results. Thus, the gift of the Holy Spirit leads to the confession "Jesus is Lord" (12:3),<sup>62</sup> and every *charism* given by that Spirit must be shaped according to the "mind of Christ" (2:16), that is, in service to the upbuilding of the messianic community (8:12; 10:31-33).<sup>63</sup> Each part of the messianic body should work for the common good rather than for the benefit of individual members (12:7).<sup>64</sup> Although Paul acknowledges "tongues" and "the interpretation of tongues" as gifts of the Holy Spirit, he already relativizes their importance by placing them last, after the "foundational"

<sup>59</sup> J.C. Hurd suggests that the Corinthian letter to Paul (see 1 Cor. 7:1) contained this line of questioning: "Concerning spiritual gifts: how is it possible to test for the Spirit? How can we (or anyone else) distinguish between spiritual men? When you were with us and spoke with tongues, you gave us no instructions on this point" (*The Origin of First Corinthians* [London: SPCK, 1965], 195). But he recognizes that behind the question lay the vested interests of the glossolalists (192). See also B.C. Johanson, "Tongues, a Sign for Believers?" *New Testament Studies* 25 (1979): 186-90.

<sup>60</sup> E. Käsemann notes that it is with this choice of terms that Paul begins his theological critique ("Ministry and Community in the New Testament," in *Essays on New Testament Themes* [Naperville, IL: SCM, 1964], 66).

<sup>61</sup> The text is very difficult, but its basic sense is clear enough: "Il est fort naturel que l'Apôtre rappelle ici les phénomènes extatiques d'un passé païen; c'est pour rappeler aux Corinthiens qu'ils sont pas en soi une manifestation du Saint-Esprit" (J. Héring, *La première Épître de St. Paul aux Corinthiens* [Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1959], 108). See also K. Maly, "1 Kor 12:1-3: Eine Regel zur Unterscheidung der Geister?" *Biblische Zeitschrift* 10 (1966): 82-95, especially 86.

<sup>62</sup> On the issue of the opposing formula, "cursed be Jesus," see N. Brox, "ANATHEMA IESOUS," *Biblische Zeitschrift* 12 (1968): 103-11; B. Pearson, "Did the Gnostics Curse Jesus?" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 86 (1967): 301-5; and Maly, "1 Kor 12:1-3," 93-95.

<sup>63</sup> Hunt, *The Inspired Body*, 125-27; Gillespie, *The First Theologians*, 142-55.

<sup>64</sup> For Paul's appropriation of a common topos, see M.M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991), 157-64; and Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 92-96.



gifts that build up community identity (12:8-10), and by emphasizing that private experience is secondary to the good of the whole body (12:12-31).

In chapter 13, Paul continues to diminish the importance of tongues—indeed, all the gifts of speech—by asserting that *agapē* is the most fundamental expression of God's Holy Spirit (compare Rom. 5:5). *Agapē* is defined in terms of service to the other in preference to personal gain. Using himself as an example, Paul declares that "the tongues of humans and of angels" are meaningless without *agapē* (13:1).<sup>65</sup> Tongues is a gift that will pass away (13:8), and Paul clearly intimates that it is among the "childish" things that must be put aside if real maturity is to be reached (13:11).<sup>66</sup>

When he turns to the discussion of the "higher gifts" that the community should pursue (12:31), Paul makes glossolalia the foil for prophecy, which he considers superior in every respect (14:5). Prophecy uses the mind, whereas ecstatic babbling does not (14:14-15). Prophecy builds up the identity of the community, whereas tongues improves only the speaker (14:3-4). Prophecy is intelligible, whereas tongues is not (14:6-10). Glossolalia also escapes the discernment of the entire community, which Paul considers essential for the healthy expression of the spiritual gifts. He regards glossolalia as an optional form of prayer, but one which can be abandoned with no great loss. He speaks in tongues himself, but would gladly give it up for the sake of building up the community (14:18-19). He can leave the impulses of the prophets to the prophets themselves since they are under rational control (14:31-32), but he must impose rules for glossolalia: tongues is restricted to the function of private prayer (14:13-16). The only time they can be spoken in public is when they can be followed by "interpretation" (14:27-28).<sup>67</sup>

Paul's evaluation of glossolalia is best summarized in 14:20-25. He reverses the glossolalists' claim by suggesting that tongues is far from an unambiguous sign of belief: tongues can mean anything; they can come from anywhere.<sup>68</sup> If the assembly has glossolalia as its dominant mode of speech, outsiders can

<sup>65</sup> That chapter 13 functions rhetorically as an *exemplum* in the same fashion as chapter 9 is shown decisively by C.R. Holladay, "1 Corinthians 13: Paul as Apostolic Paradigm," in *Greeks, Romans and Christians: Essays in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe*, ed. D.L. Balch et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 80-98.

<sup>66</sup> It is difficult to imagine that Paul did not intend to connect the rebuke to the Corinthians' "childishness" in 3:1-3, this declaration that "when I became a man, I put away childish things" (13:11), and his command with reference to tongues in 14:20: "Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; be babes in evil, but in thinking be mature." See also Hunt, *The Inspired Body*, 102-5, 129-32.

<sup>67</sup> See W. Richardson, "Liturgical Order and Glossolalia in 1 Cor 14.26c-33a," *New Testament Studies* 32 (1986): 144-53; and E. Schweizer, "The Service of Worship: An Exposition of 1 Cor 14," *Interpretation* 13 (1959): 405.

<sup>68</sup> See B.C. Johanson, "Tongues, a Sign for Unbelievers?" 186-90; and P. Roberts, "A Sign—Christian or Pagan?" *Expository Times* 90 (1978-79): 199-203.

legitimately conclude that this assembly is simply a cult like any other (14:23).<sup>69</sup> Only if prophecy is active can outsiders be brought to recognize that God is at work in this community (14:25). To make tongues more than an interesting variety of private prayer is to think like a child and not like an adult (14:20; cf. 13:11).

#### IV. THE AMBIGUOUS CHARACTER OF GLOSSOLALIA

Paul's delicately nuanced treatment of glossolalia suggests that it was, at least in his eyes, a deeply ambiguous phenomenon. In order to elicit dimensions of this religious experience that lie just below the surface of the text, some controlled use of the imagination is required.

There is every reason to suppose that for the Corinthians who spoke in tongues, the gift was unequivocally positive. Such ecstatic babbling must have seemed to them—as it does to us—all the more dramatic a “religious experience” because of its exotic character. Here is not a concept about God or the will to please God but a somatic invasion by God's own power, lifting not only their feelings to states of joy and liberation but even their tongues to lalic freedom. For the speakers themselves, the gift (see 1 Cor. 12:10, 28) must indeed have seemed a pure expression of *ta pneumatika* (12:1; 14:1), in which one “drank the Spirit” (12:13) and was activated and directed by the Spirit (12:11).

Since it was the Holy Spirit itself that activated their speech (12:6, 11), it must have appeared to them that the overwhelming of their *nous* was all the more impressive a sign of God's immediate presence, literally inside them and speaking through them! In their speech, God spoke as through angels, God clashed his cymbals, God made music on the harp, God blew his trumpet (13:1; 14:7-8). What could be a more unmistakeable sign of God's empowering and transformative presence than to have their speech directed, not by their own puny minds, but by the direct breath of God!<sup>70</sup> For that matter, how could the truth of the resurrection—that Jesus is Lord—be more emphatically expressed than by their speaking ecstatically “in the Spirit” (12:3)?

For those seeing and hearing the tongue speakers, the phenomenon was undoubtedly impressive as well. Surely in such Spirit-driven speech could be found the “powerful deeds” energized by the Spirit as a sign of faith (Gal.

<sup>69</sup> “Paul has the unbeliever mistake the Christian prayer meeting as just one more enthusiastic Hellenistic cult. The scandal here, in the strict sense, is that the distinctive word of the Gospel is not heard” (Johnson, “Norms for True and False Prophecy,” 41).

<sup>70</sup> Compare H. Gunkel, *The Influence of the Holy Spirit: The Popular View of the Apostolic Age and the Teaching of the Apostle Paul*, trans. R.A. Harrisville and P.A. Quanbeck (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 77-86.



3:1-5), the palpable demonstration that the kingdom of God does not consist in speech but in power (1 Cor. 4:20). For the observers, as much as for the speakers themselves, the phenomenon of glossolalia among those gathered in the name of Jesus must have served as proof that he was alive and powerfully present among them (see Matt. 18:20). Especially if tongues was regarded (as it was by Luke and by the wider gentile world) as a form of prophecy, then glossolalia served as well to demonstrate that the age of prophecy, so long over in Judaism, had now been reborn in this messianic sect of Judaism, and as a result, that this sect had a legitimate if not compelling claim to be considered as the authentic people of God, the rightful heir of the biblical tradition. In short, by enlivening their hearts and by liberating their tongues, this gift of the Holy Spirit made clear to all that prophecy was alive and that Jesus was alive as well.

If Paul was a glossolalist as he claimed to be (1 Cor. 14:18), then his appreciation for this gift must have been real; indeed, he does call it a *charisma* of the Holy Spirit (12:10, 30), and he does thank God that he can speak in tongues more than any of them (14:18). But his appreciation, as we have seen, is muted by equally real apprehensions. What sort of concerns led him to emphasize what he considered prophecy, namely, rational discourse, in preference to glossolalia?

Two of Paul's concerns are explicit. The first is his worry that the form of glossolalia might be mistaken for the mantic prophecy prevalent in Greco-Roman culture. His caution in 1 Corinthians 12:1 that *ta pneumatika* drew them away to idolatry when they were pagans, and his conclusion in 14:23 that outsiders would respond to an assembly of glossolalists, "they are raving as mantic prophets rave," both point in this direction. In a sense, Paul wants to protect the "one Spirit" here, just as he did the "one baptism" in Galatia, as a means of affirming the "one God."<sup>71</sup> His concern here is a variation of the command in 1 John 4:1 to "test the spirits to see if they are from God."

Paul's second manifest concern is the way in which tongue speaking can lead to disorder in the assembly. He suggests that an ecstatic cannot exercise self-control in the way that the "spirits of prophets are subject to prophets" (1 Cor. 14:32). Out of the conviction that God is a God of peace and not of confusion (14:32), therefore, Paul himself sets limits on glossolalia: at most two or three should speak in tongues, but if there is no one to interpret, a glossolalist should "keep silence in church and speak to himself and to God" (14:28). Paul's stringency here stands in contrast to his leniency with

<sup>71</sup> See my discussion in "Ritual Imprinting and the Politics of Perfection," in this same lecture series.

prophets: "You can all prophesy one by one so that all may learn and be encouraged" (14:31).

Thus far, I have scanned the surface of the text and skimmed the reasons for limiting glossolalia's expression. But are there unexpressed issues as well? It may be that glossolalia was not only messy but also a challenge to established, and especially male, authority. We can take our first clue from social-scientific work on contemporary glossolalia. More recent psychological studies reject the older view that glossolalia is intrinsically connected to psychopathology.<sup>72</sup> On the other hand, glossolalia appears to be mimetic behavior; that is, new speakers in tongues follow the patterns of sounds uttered by the lead glossolalist.<sup>73</sup> Not surprisingly, extroversion, the ability to be hypnotized, and a willingness to submit to authority, are positively correlated with the experience.<sup>74</sup> For the most part, while the experience of tongues has an integrating effect on the individual, it also fosters a sense of elitism among those who practice glossolalia, which proves disruptive in communities.<sup>75</sup> These findings throw possible light on the divided allegiances in the Corinthian community (1 Cor. 1:10-12). Cephas was a glossolalist by reputation (Acts 2:4-11), and Paul by self-acknowledgment (1 Cor. 14:18). It is certainly conceivable that the party spirit of those who cried out, "I am for Paul" or "I am for Cephas" (1 Cor. 1:12) could be correlated with the socio-psychological tendencies of submission to authority figures, elitism, and divisiveness that are attributed to contemporary glossolalists.<sup>76</sup>

Such speculation is given some support by I.M. Lewis' classic study of spirit possession and shamanism.<sup>77</sup> Lewis makes no mention of glossolalia. But he demonstrates how, in cultures that have a generalized belief in transcendental

<sup>72</sup> J.T. Richardson, "Psychological Interpretations of Glossolalia: A Reexamination of Research," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 12 (1973): 199-207; Maloney and Lovekin, *Glossolalia*, 93; J.R. Coulson and R.W. Johnson, "Glossolalia and Internal-External Locus of Control," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 5 (1977): 312-17; see also the survey of studies in C.G. Williams, *Tongues of the Spirit*, 125-91.

<sup>73</sup> For tongues as learned behavior, see Kildahl, "Psychological Observations," 355; M.K. Mayers, "The Behavior of Tongues," in *Speaking in Tongues: Let's Talk About It*, ed. Mills, 112-27.

<sup>74</sup> J.P. Kildahl, *The Psychology of Speaking in Tongues* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 50-53; Kildahl, "Psychological Observations," 353, 365; Maloney and Lovekin, *Glossolalia*, 77; H.E. Gonsalvez, *The Theology and Psychology of Glossolalia* (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1978), 107; Kelsey, *Speaking with Tongues*, 220.

<sup>75</sup> Kildahl, *Psychology of Speaking in Tongues*, 66-75; Kildahl, "Psychological Observations," 365-66. Despite his overall positive evaluation of tongues, Kelsey emphasizes their tendency to breed arrogance and elitism in the individual, and consequently, divisiveness within groups (*Speaking with Tongues*, 223, 231).

<sup>76</sup> Esler suggests that the Corinthians may well have imitated Paul's glossolalic practice ("Glossolalia and the Admission of Gentiles," 48).

<sup>77</sup> I.M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1971).

spiritual powers, claims to the possession of such powers have specific sociological implications. In particular, spirit possession serves to empower groups otherwise marginal within a society: "In its primary social function, peripheral possession thus emerges as an oblique aggressive strategy."<sup>78</sup> The claim to spirit possession does not rupture relationships but helps vent frustrations among those who do not enjoy overt power within the group.<sup>79</sup> Such claims would understandably have more appeal among the lesser orders,<sup>80</sup> enabling them functionally to destabilize a given authority structure,<sup>81</sup> while also grasping a share of power by providing what is, in such contexts, an obvious status enhancement.<sup>82</sup>

Lewis' analysis is most pertinent, and provocative, for our topic, however, because of the role spirit possession plays in gender battles. Lewis shows how certain ritualized forms of sickness, which are interpreted by males as a form of demonic possession, are evaluated quite differently by the women involved: "What men consider demoniacal sickness, women convert into a clandestine ecstasy."<sup>83</sup> Specifically with regard to women's possession cults, Lewis notes that they are "thinly disguised protest movements directed against the dominant sex."<sup>84</sup>

If Lewis' analysis has any pertinence to ancient glossolalia as an expression of spirit possession, then we are led to still another aspect of Paul's treatment of tongues, namely, his general difficulties with the speech of *women* in the Corinthian church. We note that the discussion of glossolalia is framed at either side by Paul's efforts to control women's speech in the assembly. In 1 Corinthians 11:3-16, the topic is the veiling of women who "pray or prophesy";<sup>85</sup> in 14:33b-36, Paul issues a blanket directive for women to "keep silent in the assembly."<sup>86</sup> The apparent contradiction in the two passages is notorious and has led to various resolutions.<sup>87</sup> In the first instance, some sort

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 101, 104-6, 110.

<sup>81</sup> "Enthusiasm thrives on instability" (Ibid., 175).

<sup>82</sup> Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 109-10.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 30; see also 77.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>85</sup> For a analysis of the passage as a whole in the light of recent literature, see M.C. Black, "1 Cor 11:2-16—A Re-Investigation," in *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity*, ed. C.D. Osburn, 2 vols. (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1995), 1:191-218.

<sup>86</sup> The critical issues attaching to this passage are discussed, with recent literature, by C.D. Osburn, "The Interpretation of 1 Cor 14:34-35," in *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity*, ed. Osburn, 1:219-42.

<sup>87</sup> Including considering one or both passages interpolations: for 11:2-16, see W. Walker, Jr., "1 Cor 11:2-16 and Paul's Views Regarding Women," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 94 (1975): 94-110; L. Cope, "1 Cor 11:2-16: One Step Further," *Journal of Biblical Literature*

of ecstatic speech is clearly at issue, for prayer and prophecy are included among the *charismata*.<sup>88</sup> The second case appears to involve teaching, for Paul instructs the women to learn from their husbands at home rather than speak in the assembly.<sup>89</sup> Nevertheless, both instances involve women's speech.

We observe furthermore that in both discussions, Paul appeals to the custom of the other churches concerning the roles of women.<sup>90</sup> More strikingly still, in both places, Paul invokes the concept of shame (*aischros*).<sup>91</sup> Finally, we note the element of specifically sexual embarrassment that appears to be connected with the uncovering of women's heads, in Paul's appeal to what "nature (*physis*) itself teaches us" (1 Cor. 11:14) or what is "proper" (*prepei*) in women's public behavior (1 Cor. 11:13). Even if his alternatives of wearing short hair or having the head shaved (1 Cor. 11:5-7) do not necessarily refer, as sometimes thought, to prostitution,<sup>92</sup> the probable

97 (1978): 435-36; and J. Murphy-O'Connor, "The Non-Pauline Character of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16?" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 95 (1976): 615-21; for 4:33b-36, see J. Murphy-O'Connor, "Interpolations in 1 Corinthians," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 48 (1986): 90-92; H. Conzelmann, *A Commentary on First Corinthians*, trans. J.W. Leitch (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 246; and G. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 699-702.

<sup>88</sup> In the present passage, we have "every man praying or prophesying" (*proseuchomenos ē prophēteuōn*) in 11:4, to which corresponds "every woman who prays or prophesies" in 11:5, and "it is fitting that every woman be covered while praying" in 11:13. In 1 Corinthians 14, we find prayer in verses 13, 14, and 15, and prophesying in verses 1, 3, 4, 5, 24, 31, and 39. We cannot be certain that Paul uses the terms with absolute consistency, but if chapter 11 is to be fitted to the distinctions Paul draws in chapter 14, then the "praying" may be discourse in tongues (and therefore ecstatic), and "prophesying" rational discourse (using the *nous*).

<sup>89</sup> The passage obviously resembles 1 Tim. 2:11-15, which is one reason some want to find it an interpolation. See R. Scroggs, "Paul and the Eschatological Woman," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 40 (1972): 283-303; for a discussion of similarities, see L.T. Johnson, *Letters to Paul's Delegates: 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996), 132-41.

<sup>90</sup> In 11:2, "I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I have delivered them to you," and in 11:16, "If any one is disposed to be contentious, we recognize no other practice, nor do the churches of God." In 14:33c, "As in all the churches of the saints, women should keep silent," and in 14:36, "What! Did the word of God originate with you, or are you the only ones it reached?"

<sup>91</sup> He declares that it is shameful — *aischron estin* — for a woman to pray with unveiled head or to speak in public (11:6, 14:35). The expression is all the more stunning for its occurring only here in all of Paul's letters (cf. Eph. 5:12 and Tit. 1:11), and only in these closely connected passages. Note also in 11:14, the contrast between "dishonor" (*atimia*) and "honor" (*doxa*).

<sup>92</sup> Black cites a text from Dio Chrysostom to the effect that a woman caught in adultery should have her head shaved and be a harlot, but also gives evidence that a shaven head can be associated with mourning ("1 Cor 11:2-16—A Re-Investigation," 206).



allusion to the lust of the angels (1 Cor. 11:10)<sup>93</sup> sexualizes women's unveiled ecstatic speech.

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Antoinette Clark Wire have placed Paul's delimitation of women's speech in the context of the activity of "women prophets" in the Corinthian community.<sup>94</sup> Paul's concern with veiling can thus be connected to the practices of ecstatic speech among women prophets in shrines such as that of Apollo at Delphi: the tossing of the unveiled and unbound hair by the enthused maiden was a notable feature of such prophecy.<sup>95</sup> Just as Paul was concerned that ecstasy could "lead them off to dumb idols" (1 Cor. 12:2) and that an assembly of glossalists could be mistaken for a seance of mantic prophets (14:23), so he feared that women speaking ecstatically with unveiled or loose hair could be regarded as manifesting the Pythian spirit. And if Lewis is correct, Paul might also, at some level, have intuited that such speech among women might prove threatening to the orderly patriarchal world constructed by "the law" (1 Cor. 14:34).

We can, however, go still one step further. Why does Paul's discussion sexualize such ecstatic speech and speak of it in terms of shame? Here the recent research by Dale Martin and Mary Foskett concerning the ways in which the body was constructed in Greco-Roman medical and moral discourse offers significant insight.<sup>96</sup> If serious medical opinion considered

<sup>93</sup> Gen. 6:1-4; see Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 242-46; and G. Patterson Corrington, "The 'Headless Woman': Paul and the Language of the Body in 1 Cor 11:2-16," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 18 (1991): 223-31. The passage in *Joseph and Aseneth* 15:2 is also pertinent: In the presence of the "man from heaven," Aseneth is told to remove her veil, so that her head is "like that of a young man."

<sup>94</sup> See A.C. Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul's Rhetoric* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 116-58; and E. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 226-36. Schüssler Fiorenza in particular argues that the inconsistency in Paul's argument and the cultural probabilities suggest that the issue is not one of veiling but rather of wearing the hair loose or bound. While I agree with Martin that veiling is at the heart of the passage (*The Corinthian Body*, 233), I think it is a false dilemma: Not wearing a veil when prophesying in a *furor* would in all likelihood lead to the hair's loosening and thus to the sexual and cultic associations suggested by both Schüssler Fiorenza and Martin.

<sup>95</sup> See the references in Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 227; and R. Kroeger and K. Kroeger, "An Inquiry into Evidence of Maenadism in the Corinthian Congregation," *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* 14 (1978): 2:331-346.

<sup>96</sup> Martin's discussion of this passage is provocatively and appropriately entitled "Prophylactic Veils" (*The Corinthian Body*, 229-49), and he adduces convincing evidence from the medical literature; one is only surprised that he, unlike Schüssler Fiorenza, does not explicitly connect this discussion to the one on glossolalia. M.F. Foskett advances this research by connecting it explicitly to the cultural construction of virginity in the Greco-Roman world and to the frequent link between virginity and prophecy (*A Virgin Conceived*:

male sperm as bearing the *pneuma* of life into a woman's womb;<sup>97</sup> if some ancient physiology pictured the woman's body as a receptive vessel, open both at the mouth and vagina;<sup>98</sup> if the ravings of the Delphic Oracle sitting over the smoking tripod came from her being suffused from below by the *pneuma* of Apollo, so that the god spoke out above through her mouth;<sup>99</sup> and if these ravings could be heard, by clients as well as by critics, as a sort of orgasmic frenzy;<sup>100</sup> then the sexual connotations of female prophecy in this culture are obvious. If any of these associations were in Paul's mind (and the allusions to sex and shame are his, after all), it is small wonder that he was worried not only about the disorder that glossolalia could create but also about the deep confusion over the sort of *pneuma* by which Christians were being possessed. In this light, his restrictions are less surprising than his willingness to credit this ecstatic gift and give it some degree of expression. He does conclude, after all, "do not forbid speaking in tongues, but let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:39-40).

#### V. GLOSSOLALIA AND DEVIANCE

In the second and third centuries, glossolalia appears only infrequently. The most noteworthy outburst is associated with the figure of Montanus (ca. 160) and the two women prophets who accompanied him.<sup>101</sup> Montanus apparently regarded himself as a passive instrument of the Holy Spirit, "like a lyre struck with a plecton."<sup>102</sup> He understood his "strange speech" (*xenophōnein*) as a form of prophecy, and his speech was accompanied by the frenzy associated with mantic prophecy.<sup>103</sup> Even in Montanism, however, such inspired utterance did not seem to survive the founders,<sup>104</sup> although the

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*Virginity as a Character-Indicator in Luke-Acts and the Protevangelium of James* [Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1997]).

<sup>97</sup> See Aristotle *Generation of Animals* 1.20; the entire discussion of *sperma* is in 1.17-21.

<sup>98</sup> Aristotle *History of Animals* 10.5; Hippocrates *Aphorisms* 5.51. See Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 237-39.

<sup>99</sup> See the vivid story of Apollo's closing the throat of the Oracle in prophecy in Lucan *Pharsalia* 5.160-197; Plutarch *The Obsolescence of Oracles (Moralia)* 432D-E; 404E; 405C; Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 239-40.

<sup>100</sup> Virgil *Aeneid* 6.77-101; Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 240-42.

<sup>101</sup> See Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 5.15-18.

<sup>102</sup> Epiphanius *Panarion* 48.4.1; it is perhaps noteworthy that Epiphanius also thought that Montanus had formerly been a priest of Cybele, which cult, as noted above (note 41), had glossolalic activity connected to it.

<sup>103</sup> Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 5.16.7-10.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.17.4.



Montanist Tertullian does invoke (against Marcion) the presence of ecstatic speech in his community as a proof of its authenticity.<sup>105</sup>

Irenaeus of Lyons (ca. 200) also claims acquaintance with tongues, although his report is succinct and influenced by Pauline language: "We have heard many brethren in the church having prophetic gifts and speaking through the spirit in all tongues and bringing to light men's secrets for the common good and explaining the mysteries of God. Such persons the Apostle calls spiritual."<sup>106</sup> Irenaeus apparently understands tongues to mean "other languages." But he also reports on the activities of a Valentinian Gnostic called Marcus, whom Irenaeus regards as a charlatan and magician and whose repertoire includes prophecy. According to Irenaeus, Marcus seduces women and coaxes them to prophecy, and the manner of their speech once more suggests glossolalia or mantic prophecy.<sup>107</sup> It is worth noting that in the case of Montanism and Gnosticism, glossolalia is associated with women.<sup>108</sup>

Apart from these notices, there are only the occasional patches in Gnostic compositions of strung-together syllables that resemble transcribed glossolalia<sup>109</sup> and the numerous concatenations of sounds in the magical papyri that are used in spells. Phenomenologically, it is difficult to distinguish these from "praying in tongues."<sup>110</sup> In such cases, however, it is impossible to determine what sort of oral activity generated or was generated by the literary text. Some preachers apparently even used babbling speech in public, at least according to the anti-Christian polemicist Celsus, who calls their utterances "without form or meaning."<sup>111</sup>

Arguments from silence are deservedly suspect, but the paucity of evidence for glossolalia in the second two hundred years of Christianity suggests that it became an increasingly marginal activity. Most of the occurrences appear in groups rejected by the orthodox tradition. This is no surprise. As Lewis notes, "the more entrenched the religious authority, the more hostile toward haphazard inspiration."<sup>112</sup> The silence itself, however, can variously be

<sup>105</sup> Tertullian *Against Marcion* 5.8.

<sup>106</sup> Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 5.6.1; see also Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 5.7.6.

<sup>107</sup> Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 1.14-16.

<sup>108</sup> In this connection, it is worth noting that in *The Testament of Job* 48-51, it is Job's daughters who speak in the dialect of angels.

<sup>109</sup> See *Pistis Sophia* 4:142; *Gospel of the Egyptians* 44, 66; and *Zostrianos* 127.

<sup>110</sup> *Greek Magical Papyri*, 3.560-85; 4.945, 960, 1120-25; 12.345-50. D. E. Aune thinks that the differences are more important than the similarities ("Magic in Early Christianity," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, vol. 2.23.2, ed. W. Haase (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), 1549-51).

<sup>111</sup> Origen *Against Celsus* 7.9. Note also Origen's sexualized portrayal of pagan prophecy in 7.3.

<sup>112</sup> *Ecstatic Religion*, 34.

weighed. It may indicate that tongues was practiced rarely and by dissident groups. Or, it may suggest that orthodox writers, suspicious of charismatic activity generally, ignored manifestations of popular religion that did not meet their increasingly high standards of rationality.<sup>113</sup>

In either case, our information comes mainly from the orthodox side, and at our present distance we can only observe that by the late fourth century, John Chrysostom confesses himself at a loss interpreting the passage about tongues in 1 Corinthians; he can only guess that Paul was referring to foreign languages.<sup>114</sup> And in the fifth century, Augustine of Hippo dismisses the significance of tongues as a special dispensation of the primitive church, no longer of pertinence to the church in his day.<sup>115</sup> An experience of the Holy Spirit that in the end seemed as embarrassing as it was impressive, glossolalia began its long subterranean life, surfacing only now and then as a form of enthusiasm that inspired some and repelled as many others.<sup>116</sup>

<sup>113</sup> See Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 5.17.2-4; Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 132.

<sup>114</sup> "This whole place is very obscure; but the obscurity is produced by our ignorance of the facts referred to and by their cessation, being such as used to occur but now no longer take place" (*Homilies on First Corinthians* 29, 32, 35).

<sup>115</sup> Augustine *Homilies on First John* 6, 10; see also *On Baptism Against the Donatists* 3, 18.

<sup>116</sup> It is a fascinating aspect of this history that the gender dimension analyzed by Lewis remains an important element; see the role of women in enthusiastic movements described by Knox, *Enthusiasm*, 30, 55, 68, 162, 319.

# The Real Jesus of the Sayings Gospel Q

by JAMES M. ROBINSON

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THE TOPIC OF "the real Jesus" did not even exist until the Enlightenment, unless one wanted, as a latter-day Monophysite or Arian or Adoptionist, to revive long since forgotten heresies. But with the Enlightenment, or, more precisely, with the historicism of the nineteenth century, the question of the real Jesus was posed: Who really was Jesus, as a real person in history? What can the historian say? Over the last two centuries, there gradually emerged a new access to Jesus, made available through objective historical research.

## I. THE REDISCOVERY OF THE SAYINGS GOSPEL Q

Up until modern times, people could only know about Jesus through their religious experience in the church, codified in creeds and doctrines about Christ. We all know, no doubt by heart, the Jesus of the Apostles' Creed, which has turned out to be based not on a text Jesus taught his disciples but rather on the baptismal confession developed in Rome in the second century and projected back onto the beginnings. But in that familiar creed Jesus' own history, what he himself said and did during his lifetime, is fully bypassed. Not what he said and did, but only what they said about him, counted as saving information: born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate. But what lies in between? Is that of no significance? Did not Jesus himself think that what he said and did had saving significance? Has Paul's kerygma of cross and resurrection, which is what lies behind the Apostles' Creed, really said everything that we want to know about the significance of Jesus? In the case of other dying and rising gods of the Roman Empire, what one narrates about them, the myth, is the nub of the issue. Nothing else is known about them—if they actually lived, nothing has survived to be reported—only the myth about their dying and rising. They are prototypes and guarantors of the afterlife, hardly more. But Jesus really lived in time and space and was significant enough that all these myths were absorbed into his significance, as the one and only dying and rising God. But what was Jesus' own significance, which gave him this predominance?

To be sure, the Evangelists themselves have already tailored their narrations of Jesus' sayings and healings to focus on the kerygma, making the gospel of cross and resurrection the quintessence of the whole ministry of Jesus. So can one then be spared the details? Yet for modern people, a person who remains historically inaccessible is somehow unreal, more fancy than fact, indeed a myth. It would boil down to a kind of modern Doceticism if, moved by awe before the exaltedness of Jesus, we were to declare his historical reality to be academically unattainable or religiously irrelevant. The result was, in the nineteenth century, the quest of the historical Jesus, of which Albert Schweitzer wrote so masterfully.

It may be no coincidence that a century and a half ago, as this rediscovery of Jesus was just getting under way, there came to light a collection of Jesus' sayings used by Matthew and Luke in composing their Gospels. Matthew and Luke updated the sayings so that they made clear what Jesus must have meant, namely, what Matthew and Luke meant, and imbedded his sayings into their copies of the Gospel of Mark, making of Matthew and Luke hybrid Gospels, partly Mark and partly the sayings collection.

Then, after Matthew and Luke used it in their enlarged, improved Gospels, that primitive collection of Jesus' sayings was itself no longer copied and transmitted by Christian scribes, since the church of course—unfortunately—preferred those more up-to-date and complete Gospels. The more primitive text was itself lost completely from sight. In fact, it ceased to exist. For since we have no first-century copies of anything Christian, no copies of Q survived. It was never heard of again, after the end of the first century, until, in 1838, a scholar in Leipzig, Germany, Christian Hermann Weisse, detected it lurking just under the surface of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Since after its rediscovery it was commonly referred to as a source of the canonical Gospels, scholars came to call it simply "the source," in German, *Quelle*, abbreviated Q. But since "Q" sounds rather cryptic, not to say flat, we have of late come to call it, for clarity's sake and to be able to refer to it as a text in its own right, not just a source for something else, the Sayings Gospel Q.

This old Sayings Gospel was not like the canonical Gospels, so colored over with the kerygma of cross and resurrection that the historical Jesus, though imbedded therein, was actually lost from sight by the heavy overlay of golden patina. Rather, this document was just primitive enough to contain many sayings of Jesus without kerygmatic overlay and without the Q redactor's own additions. Here the real Jesus, who actually lived in history, has his say. So what did he have to say? Such questions have again become acute in our time, at least among modern people who stand within the Christian tradition but also want to know what really happened, what Jesus was really up to.

I can of course only attempt a preliminary answer, for my work is far from complete. And I limit myself almost exclusively to this lost and rediscovered collection of Jesus' sayings. I am working intensely on reconstructing word for word in Greek that Sayings Gospel, by undoing as best I can the improvements by Matthew and Luke, so as to listen to what Jesus himself had to say. In fact, I am heading an international team of more than forty, mostly younger scholars who, over the past decade, have been trying to decide just how that Greek source read, before Matthew and Luke updated it, but, thank goodness, left it sufficiently intact that our efforts are not in vain.

We have assembled an enormous database of opinions expressed by scholars over the past 150 years about the original wording of Q. After sorting French, German, and English excerpts from scholarly literature in chronological order, we have been meeting up to three times a year in America and Europe to evaluate that mass of scholarly opinion and thus to work out what seems the most objective reconstruction of the sayings, one by one. We have gone through all of Q once and are beginning to go through it a second time, now publishing, at Peeters Press in Leuven, our massive database under the series title *Documenta Q*. A first volume, containing the Lord's Prayer, appeared last spring; a second volume, containing the temptations of Jesus, has just appeared this spring; and a third is in press. Three more volumes are to appear in 1997, and we hope to maintain the tempo of four per year until we complete the publication of the database in 2002. In view of this massive publication of scholarly opinion, I refrain here from learned-sounding discussions with the scholars, so as to keep in focus the text of the Sayings Gospel itself.

We will also publish around the year 2000 a one-volume critical edition of Q in a synopsis, including the Gospels of Matthew, Luke, Mark, and Thomas, with English, German, and French translations of Q and Thomas, which is already being edited. Just to make available a reliable copy of the oldest Gospel, lost for 1900 years, is itself worth doing. But, even more important, Q points back, in its oldest layers, to what Jesus himself had to say. What could he possibly have been thinking as he was doing what he was doing? Thanks to the Sayings Gospel, the question is really not all that impossible to answer. I do think we can catch sight of what he was up to. That is where I want to begin with you tonight.

## II. THE SAYINGS GOSPEL'S PRESENTATION OF JESUS

Since I am working from a collection of Jesus' sayings, I have to abstain from the narrative part of his biography, the stories of his birth, healings,



Holy Week, and Easter, for, as we will see, they are not in the Sayings Gospel Q at all, or at most, present in a very indirect way. Yet I am happy to limit myself to the Sayings Gospel Q, to concentrate on what Jesus must have been thinking, to judge by what he was saying.

But before turning to Jesus' sayings, let me at least say what one can infer from Q about his life: He grew up in a small village of lower or southern Galilee called in Q (4:16) Nazara, but always called Nazareth elsewhere in the canonical Gospels, a hamlet perhaps too small even to have had a local synagogue in which Jesus might have learned to read the Hebrew scriptures. He must have found "sermons in stones," to judge by the local color that becomes so eloquent in his parables (the stones themselves being especially prominent in Q).

In any case, we know nothing about him until he left home to join the apocalyptic movement of John by undergoing John's initiation rite, baptism in the Jordan. John did not seem to have provided much guidance as to what to do next, other than, having straightened up, to fly right. Baptism by immersion in the Jordan must have symbolized taking off one's old worldly identity and reemerging as a new, godly person. But what does that mean? Where does one go from there?

Perhaps, it is Jesus' wrestling with this question that comes to mythical expression in Q as a debate with the devil in the three temptations of Jesus. In any case, the temptations are the only thing that occurs in Q between John's baptizing Jesus and Jesus' launching his own ministry with his inaugural sermon. For Jesus went directly to the people with the good news of a lifestyle underwritten by God himself.

Before turning to the substantive issue of where Jesus' ideas went, I would like to digress a moment to speak superficially, geographically, about where Jesus himself went: Jesus moved to Capharnaum on the northern edge of the Sea of Galilee, chosen perhaps because it was ideally suited to the lifestyle he had in mind. Capharnaum was beside the lake, which provided a God-given year-round food supply, was well below sea level, and hence had a mild climate, and was a crossroad for land and sea travel. There were secluded villages in the forested mountains behind, to which Jesus could withdraw, one on the Galilean side of the frontier, Chorazin, and one just across the frontier, under a different ruler, Bethsaida, which seems to have been the home town of others baptized by John. He got along well with the despised customs officials (whom we probably translate inadequately as "tax collectors," not to say "publicans") and the equally unwelcome centurion of the Roman army of occupation stationed at Capharnaum, who implored Jesus to heal his boy,



pointing out that Jesus could do it by just giving a command without even having to profane himself by entering a gentile house.

Let me get to the issue of what Jesus was up to. He seems to have found his own mission in speaking to the more basic question of where one goes from here rather than simply in continuing John's initiation rite. Apparently, Jesus himself did not baptize. But he must have begun by believing in the imminent day of judgment as John proclaimed, for why would he otherwise have immersed himself in John's cause? Yet he himself did not make the repetition of that rite, or John's apocalypticism, the focus of what he himself was up to.

One only needs to look at the single overlap of their vocabulary, the metaphor of the tree and its fruit. John used this metaphor to call on people to bear fruit resulting from repentance, warning that if one did not produce good fruit, one would soon be chopped down at the judgment like a diseased tree (Q 3:8-9). Jesus dropped the threat of judgment but reflected on the metaphor itself (Q 6:43): There are indeed different kinds of fruit trees, as anyone living on the land knows, and each bears its own kind of fruit. Thorn bushes do not produce figs, and bramble bushes do not produce grapes. A healthy tree produces edible fruit, but a diseased tree produces only fruit that never ripens. Now, people are like trees: If you are good, you produce good things, but if you are evil, your produce is bad. What comes out of your mouth shows what kind of heart you have, just as what fruit comes off a tree shows what kind of tree it is. What matters is being the right kind of person. Then you will automatically produce the right kind of fruit. Here Jesus' message, in distinction from that of John, was not "Be good or get chopped down!" but rather "Let me tell you what being a good person really means—I call on you to be just that!"

As this little sample illustrates, Jesus sought to come to grips with the basic intentions of people. He addressed them personally, as to what kind of people they were. He called on them—he did not teach them ideas, as would a theologian. For when we take his sayings and distill from them our doctrines, we have manipulated his sayings for our own purposes, first of all, for the purpose of avoiding his addressing us personally. We reclassify his sayings as objective teachings to which we can give intellectual assent rather than letting them strike home as the personal challenge he intended them to be. Our learned, highly technical scholarly debates about Jesus' teaching would be, from his perspective, our dodge. So he would not agree with any of it but would want to cut through it all for an honest look at our heart.

If I then proceed to present, in as objective a way as I as a scholar can, his teachings, my very objectivity would be my dodge, by means of which I would

evade his point. Therefore, in trying to talk really about what he had to say, what I say has to retain his note of direct appeal. This tone of interpersonal encounter, this person-to-person mode, is the only really objective way to talk about what Jesus was talking about, for it was that personal talk that he was talking, and walking.

### III. WHAT DID JESUS HAVE TO SAY IN THE SAYINGS GOSPEL?

Looking out for number one is not the way to go. One should not be concerned about one's own life. Just think of the ravens (Q 12:22-31). They neither work the fields nor store in barns, so as to have enough stored up to get through the winter. They do not need to worry about such things, for God provides their nourishment. It is similar with lilies, what we would call wildflowers, which do not need to produce their clothing on a weaver's loom, and yet the splendor of their adornment far exceeds the glorious costumes of a king like Solomon. God provides their clothing—he already knows what you need! You should count on him just as they do. Trust him without a care in the world! What one normally calls faith in God is only little faith, hardly better than what gentiles call religion. No matter how hard you work at self-preservation, you will not be able to stretch out life so as to avoid death. So it makes more sense to get involved in the actualization of God's rule, where fulness of life is to be found, than to focus on self-preservation.

What does it really mean, to seek God's rule? Here, Matthew interpreted God's reign by adding, as a kind of gloss, "God's righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). So one talks about Matthew's moralizing interpretation of the kingdom of God. But that probably is not all Jesus had in mind. For, in another place in the Sayings Gospel, almost the same as was said about the ravens and wild flowers crops up again, and so one passage can help interpret the other; that passage is the Lord's Prayer (Q 11:2-4). Here, the petition "Thy kingdom come!" is again glossed by Matthew's added interpretation, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven!" But here it becomes clear that the so-called moral interest of Matthew does not come to expression as a moral appeal to the community but rather in a petition directed to God. It is he who should establish his will on earth! God's rule is what brings God's will, his own righteousness, to earth. And we can only ask him to do this for us. Of course, he will not have established his will on earth as long as people act unjustly among themselves, but that is not the actual focus of the prayer. God himself should bring to pass his just will!

The prayer in Q itself, prior to Matthew's gloss, had interpreted the first petition, "Thy kingdom come!" as having to do with God's providing food, in

what had been the immediately following petition, "Give us this day our daily bread!" So God's rule has to do primarily with eating? This option, offensive not only to us but already to Matthew, motivated him both to insert "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" and also, at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount (the Beatitudes pronounced on the poor and hungry), to add that God's blessing has to do with the "poor in spirit," who "hunger and thirst after righteousness," not simply with hungry beggars, which is what the Greek word translated "poor" actually means. But Jesus himself did not take offense at talking literally about food. In this regard, liberation theologians have understood Jesus well, for they experienced the setting of his sayings as they themselves lived among the poor and oppressed of South America. It is not because the poor are better or more worthy that the Beatitudes apply to them but simply because their plight is greater. Contrary to all outer appearances, they are fortunate, because God's rule means taking care of them.

The Lord's Prayer is followed in Q itself by its interpretation (Q 11:9-13): Even a far-from-perfect human father will not give his son a stone if he asks for bread, or a snake if he asks for fish. How much more then the heavenly Father! You only need to ask him, and he will give you good things. It is this kind of trust that Jesus meant by "faith." This time, it is Luke who spiritualized: God will give the Holy Spirit. But Jesus himself promised that the heavenly Father would give bread and fish.

One comes nearer to Jesus' lifestyle when one looks a bit more closely at his mission instructions, addressed to the most active disciples, nicknamed today "wandering radicals." They do not have a penny in their pocket. They need neither purse nor backpack, since they take with them neither money nor supplies (Q 10:4). They live like the ravens and wildflowers in the field, or like the dirt-cheap sparrows that never fall to earth without God's knowing (Q 12:7). These disciples entrust themselves, completely unprotected, to God. They do not even wear sandals (Q 10:4), perhaps as a symbol of penance, perhaps only to attest that they, even if unprotected, nevertheless get by. They are not even equipped with a club to protect against wild animals or robbers. They go like lambs among wolves (Q 10:3).

One should offer no resistance (Q 6:29-30). If someone hits you on one cheek, you should offer him the other. Even a mugger who snatches your coat should be given the shirt off your back as a gift. If someone asks you for something, give it to him, and if someone seeks a loan, do not ask for it back. We are not only to ask God to forgive us but to forgive the debts of those in

debt to us (although we have accustomed ourselves not to hear that part of the Lord's Prayer).

One should love one's enemies, indeed pray for one's persecutors. Usually, one is generous to good people, one's social equals, who can return the favor. But that is being no better than customs officers and gentiles. Rather, you should imitate God, who rains, and shines his sun, on bad people as well as good. Only if you act that way, are you a child of God. Jesus was first called son of God not because he was like a Roman emperor, or like Hercules, or like other sons of God in that society, but because he was like God, loving his enemy.

With such a lifestyle, one seems not to have any chance in everyday reality. However, it has belatedly come to attention that, for example, in concentration camps, people have a better chance of survival if they band together into small groups of selfless persons who are ready to give the little they have to the most needy among them. Of course, our plight is not so desperate, and so we do not have to turn to such drastic measures. Think of the rich young ruler, who was just plain too well off, too much like us, to be a disciple of Jesus.

We are not normally the other person's help but rather his fate, just as he is our fate. He has nothing to eat because I have stashed away extra bread. I am cold because he is hiding an extra coat in his backpack. He does not have a penny to his name because I have hoarded money in my money belt. We are all tools of evil, which is why life is ruined for us all.

In the extreme case of blood vengeance, which takes place between families or clans or villages in many "backward" parts of the world still today, we all agree that such a thing can only harm both sides and hence is to be gotten rid of by any means possible. Yet, in the less spectacular cases that take place under more normal circumstances, the equivalent selfishness, acting in one's own interest, no matter what damage is done in the process to the other, is considered somehow acceptable in our so very "civilized" culture. Everybody is normally expected to look out for number one.

But God's rule is something quite different. And it was that rule that Jesus and his circle wanted to introduce. How that took place in practice is described in some detail in the mission discourse: At the very beginning, before there were sympathizers, when there were no safe houses to which one could turn, much less house churches, the committed few disciples (and no doubt Jesus himself) walked, barefoot and without any supplies, from place to place.

One knocked on some unknown door and said, if the door was opened at all, "Shalom!" (Q 10:5-6). This greeting was not meant in a purely empty



sense, the way we say "good morning" without having the least interest in what kind of day the other person will have, and as one could, then and today, say "Shalom" in a completely emptyheaded way. Rather, if one was let in, the head of the household was called "son of peace," that is to say, the blessing originally implied in the greeting "Shalom" came upon the host. But if one was turned away, the blessing returned to the one who had knocked, who then had to go farther and keep knocking until he was received and could actually give his "Shalom."

One ate what was put before one, be it simple, be it sumptuous. The Jesus people were not ascetics in the technical sense. John used for clothing and nourishment only what was, so to speak, directly offered by nature (Mark 1:6). He neither ate bread nor drank wine (Q 7:33). That is why he was thought to be crazy, demon possessed. John stood in sharp contrast to Jesus, who sat at table with such worldly people as customs officers and sinners. Of course, he was also rejected, though with the reverse justification: He was smeared as a glutton and drunkard (Q 7:34). In any case, Jesus did not make an issue, one way or the other, out of what he got to eat.

With regard to clothing and nourishment, Jesus lived from what people, usually women, prepared for him. The interpretation of the petition "Thy kingdom come!" in the original Prayer in Q itself, namely, "Give us this day our daily bread!" was not answered by manna falling from heaven but rather by women, who, following a recipe found in Q (13:21), hid leaven in three measures of meal until the whole was leavened then put it into the oven until it was transformed into bread.

Such wandering radicals as Jesus sent out, who went as he did from house to house, were called at that time, before there were church offices like priest or bishop, simply "workers" (Q 10:2, 7). Whatever the workers were given as food or housing, they had earned, worked for. Their work consisted in what they could offer to those who lived in the house, the "peace" they could give in return for the hospitality. It consisted in healing those who were sick, accompanied with the reassuring word "God's rule has touched you" (Q 10:9). That is to say, this is the way of life that one should seek, free of care like the ravens and wildflowers, the rule whose coming one was to ask for in the Lord's Prayer. For one only needs to ask, and it will be given; to seek, and one will find; to knock, and the door will be opened (Q 11:9). One can entrust oneself to God as heavenly Father—that is what they believed, practiced, and proclaimed.

Sickness is not the will of God, not part of his rule. It is evil. When the sickness was accompanied by odd gestures and cries, as in the case of mental

illnesses and "moonstruck" epileptics, it was attributed to demons, impure spirits. So it was particularly noticeable that God intervenes in such cases. It is by his finger that demons are driven out (Q 11:20), irrespective of whether it was Jesus or "your sons" who functioned as exorcist (Q 11:21). Jesus (like other exorcists) had power over demons, not because he, like Faust, was in league with their leader Beelzebul (Q 11:15) but because God rules here and now with God's own finger (Q 11:22). It is a matter of God's intervening to provide bread, to heal the sick, that is to say, to rule. The petitions of the Lord's Prayer, no doubt used as a table prayer by Jesus when admitted to the hospitality of a home, were actually promptly answered in the house of the son of peace.

The reality of death is not denied in an illusory way. Though the sayings are reassuring, death is presupposed in a realistic way: The grass in the field, no matter how beautiful today, is tomorrow thrown into the oven (Q 12:28). The sparrows are never forgotten by God, and yet they fall to earth (Q 12:7). One is called upon not to fear physical death, so as not to lose one's very self, panicked by fear of death (Q 12:4), which is the greatest threat of evil forces, from unbearable pain to dictatorships.

The saying about taking one's cross (Q 14:27) may presuppose Jesus' own death, which is not otherwise mentioned in Q. But the two other sayings of the same cluster probably go back to Jesus himself and say much the same thing: One must even leave one's own family behind to participate in Jesus' cause (Q 14:26). Only the person who loses one's life for Jesus' cause will really save it (Q 17:33). Even if Jesus did not himself predict his death, as the predictions of his passion that recur repeatedly in Mark would have us think, one can hardly assume that Jesus did not envisage the possibility of his persecution or assassination, even though the Sayings Gospel offers no explicit predictions of his death. He was surely prepared inwardly to accept death if it came to that, as his followers should also be.

#### IV. HOW DOES THE SAYINGS GOSPEL HANDLE JESUS' DEATH?

Although the Sayings Gospel has no passion narrative or resurrection stories, this omission does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that the Q people knew nothing of Jesus' fate or had never thought about where it left them. It is hardly probable that his death was not quickly rumored among his followers, even into the most obscure corners of Galilee. But then, after his death, was not the only sensible thing to do, to give up the whole thing as some tragic miscalculation, a terrible failure? Jesus had assured them, "the Father from heaven gives good things to those who ask him," and yet his last

word according to Mark was "My God, my God, why have you left me in the lurch?" (Mark 15:34). What was there left to proclaim?

The emergence of the Sayings Gospel was, to put it quite pointedly, itself the miracle at Easter! Rudolf Bultmann formulated a famous, or infamous, saying to the effect that Jesus rose into the kerygma. But perhaps we would do better to say: Jesus rose into his own word. The resurrection was attested, in substance at least, in the Q community, in that his word was again to be heard, not as a melancholy recollection of the failed dream of a noble, but terribly naive, person, but rather as the still valid, and constantly renewed, trust in the heavenly Father, who, as in heaven, will rule also on earth.

There are a few sayings in Q that are best understood in terms of such a "resurrection" faith. "What I say to you in the darkness, speak out in the light; and what you hear whispered into your ear, preach from the rooftops" (Q 12:3/Matt. 10:27). This sounds as if Jesus had rather secretly only whispered his message and left the spreading of the good word to his disciples. We would have expected it to be just the reverse. Surely Jesus said it better, louder, and clearer than anyone! But perhaps such a saying reflects the recollection that his message was suppressed by force and thus obscured but then became all the brighter and louder as it was nevertheless revalidated and reproclaimed.

There may be the same kind of contrast between the time before Jesus' death and the time after it in the saying about the unforgiveable sin. The saying is usually thought to be telling those who had rejected Jesus himself when he was alive that afterwards they are not irretrievably lost but have a new chance through the preaching of the disciples equipped with the Spirit after his death.

In both these difficult sayings, the preaching after Jesus' death is held to be more audible, more effective, more true even, than the preaching of Jesus himself. This is an "Easter faith" of a special kind!

The Easter faith of the Sayings Gospel then has primarily to do with the authority of Jesus' sayings, which even after his death are not devalued but only then come into full power. In this high evaluation of Jesus' sayings lies the Christology of the Sayings Gospel. This is why Jesus' first disciples did not really need to use christological titles, which seem so indispensable to us.

"Why do you call me Lord, Lord, but do not do what I tell you?" This question introduces the concluding exhortation of Jesus' inaugural sermon in Q (6:46). Thereupon follows the double parable of houses built on rock or sand (Q 6:47-49). Everyone who hears my words and does them will be acquitted in the judgment! Not the high priest in the temple in Jerusalem or

the baptism of John the Baptist in the Jordan River brings the ultimate salvation, but rather keeping Jesus' words, as they are conserved in the Sayings Gospel—to be sure, on the condition that they really are kept, observed, and not just conserved!

The eschatology of the Sayings Gospel shares the view that in the general resurrection, everyone will be judged according to his or her own works, as commonly assumed in antiquity, in Judaism, and even by Paul (2 Cor. 5:10). Since all will rise at the same time, one will observe the judgment of the others and in some cases even influence it: "Your sons" who are exorcists "shall be your judges. . . . The queen of the south will be raised at the judgment with this generation and will condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here" (Q 11:19, 31-32). Q's closing word is that those who have followed Jesus "will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Q 22:30). Everyone will be there at the day of judgment, and the truth will out!

So it is not surprising that, in their own defense, people would appeal for acquittal by referring to their connection with Jesus: "Then you will start saying, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.' And he will say to you, 'I do not know you. Away from me, evildoers!'" (Q 13:26-27). Such Q texts do not yet have in view Jesus as the Judge but rather envisage him, among the character witnesses who testify, as the crucial one in the view of the Judge. He speaks up for, or against, people who appeal to him. Another saying puts it a bit differently: "Everyone who confesses me before men, the son of man will confess before the angels. But whoever denies me before men, the son of man will deny before the angels." Here, too, Jesus is not Judge but a witness in court. The angels are the judges. Yet the early Christology of the Sayings Gospel can be sensed from such eschatological sayings: If Jesus' witness is decisive for one's fate, since neither God nor the angels will reject his witness, then it really does not make much difference with what title or lack of title that happens. If it's decided, it's decided! Doing what Jesus said, not what somebody else said, but really doing it, is what stands up in the day of judgment.

In the course of the christological development, Jesus himself comes to be understood as the Judge. His witness, as after all decisive, is objectified, becoming functionally the Judge's sentence itself, and so he comes to represent or replace God or the angels. In the Sayings Gospel, this



development is hardly more than suggested. The saying with which Q closes, to the effect that those who have followed Jesus will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Q 22:30), has for the first time humans as judges and so surely must presuppose that Jesus himself functions as the main Judge, though this is not said explicitly. But even this concluding saying does not imply that Jesus is the exclusive judge but envisages a judging shared with his inner circle. The bare beginnings of the later Christology are only suggested but not at all developed. One thing that makes the Sayings Gospel so fascinating, not only for laypersons but even for theologians, is to see the first gingerly steps from Jesus' own, rather selfless message, oriented to God's reign, which he activated while otherwise being unaware of himself, to our focus on him as the center of our faith!

#### V. HOW CAN ONE GET FROM THE SAYINGS GOSPEL TO US?

If the Sayings Gospel gives us insight into the doing and thinking of Jesus, how does that connect to us? Q as a document ceased to exist after the first century. Is not its Jesus, the real Jesus, also gone? Simply detecting, a century and a half ago, a collection of his sayings imbedded in Matthew and Luke does not necessarily mean that we have any connection with him.

The real Jesus, as I have sought to portray him on the basis of the Sayings Gospel, was not only in his way otherworldly—he was worlds apart from us! Yet we may still want to understand ourselves as his disciples, his church, with him as our Lord. The efforts undertaken again and again over the past century to trace a line of continuity from the historical Jesus to Paul and from there to our church have been all too tenuous—more ingenious than convincing. It is easier to trace the path from Paul's Christ to us than to trace the path from Paul back to Jesus. Although Paul is our oldest source, dating back to around 50 C.E., Paul himself had not met the historical Jesus but only the resurrected Christ, who for Paul literally and figuratively so outshone Jesus as to leave Jesus out of sight.

Yet there was in early Christianity another path from Jesus to the church, less dramatic than the great theologian and missionary Paul, but more pervasive in the actual life of early Christians: the Gospel of Mathew! That Gospel was by far was the most widely used early Christian book, to judge by the number of copies that have surfaced in the dry sands of Egypt, or by the number of quotations in early Christian writers, or by the number of textual corruptions introduced from Matthew into other Gospels by scribal copyists obviously more familiar with Matthew. The Christianity that step-by-step won over the ancient world, until the Roman Empire became the Christian

Byzantine Empire, was primarily the Matthean rather than the Pauline kind of Christianity. It was a Christianity of mercy and philanthropy, which won the allegiance of the underprivileged and suppressed, that is to say, the mass of the population, more so than the Pauline theology that ultimately flowed into the Neoplatonic philosophical theology of the educated minority (with literacy standing at about 15 percent). Christianity as a mass movement so powerful that Constantine finally had to yield to its pressure was more a Matthean Christianity; and that means it was, through Matthew, really connected to Jesus.

In this sense, the question of tracing the path from Matthew back to Jesus is a way to see how we effect the last step back to our roots. But here we hit upon an untilled field. The discipline of church history always traced the path of events via Paul. A conspiracy of silence has obscured what happened to the movement that Jesus launched in Galilee, ever since Luke's Acts told the story of the church's beginning with only one passing allusion to there even being a church in Galilee (Acts 9:31). Luke's view of the Christian witness skipped from "all Judea and Samaria" to "the end of the earth" without even mentioning Galilee (Acts 1:8). Paul knew very few sayings of Jesus and did not have a kind of religiosity, much less a theology, built on Jesus' sayings; he even argues that knowing Jesus according to the flesh, the earthly Jesus, is not really necessary (2 Cor. 5:16), so as to argue that he is in no regard less qualified than Jesus' own disciples.

The Book of Acts also presents such a Pauline Christianity: Jesus has ascended to heaven, and it is the Holy Spirit who since Pentecost leads the church. Sayings of Jesus are conspicuously absent from the life of the church in Acts. Luke had buried them back in his Gospel, and once he had finished copying out the end of Q (at Luke 22:30), he rather explicitly said that the idyllic, unreal world of Jesus has been put behind us, for we must now come to grips with reality, buy a sword, become the church militant, and replace the kind of mission Jesus had advocated and practiced with one like the missionary journeys of Paul. But when one turns to Matthew, the contacts with the Sayings Gospel Q are so striking that one has now come to realize that the Gospel of Matthew was written in a community that itself had been part of the Sayings Gospel's movement.

So it has become a new scholarly task to supplement the standard version of church history, based on Paul and Acts, with the church history that leads from Jesus via the Sayings Gospel to Matthew, that is to say, from Galilee directly to Antioch without the detour via the Damascus road. For the Gospel of Matthew probably comes from the region of Antioch, from a small

community that had begun in Galilee and continued there for some time, since one was told not to go on the roads of the gentiles or into the towns of the Samaritans but only to the lost sheep of Israel (Matt. 10:6-7). Perhaps it was the war with Rome in the 60s, which devastated Galilee before reaching Jerusalem, that finally forced the remnants of the Q community to join the refugees fleeing north up the coast to the nearest metropolitan area, Antioch, the capital of the former Seleucid Empire.

The first steps from Galilee to Antioch, the beginning of the path from Jesus to us, can be sketched as follows:

(1) Jesus' immediate followers reproclaimed Jesus' sayings, which were collected into a number of small clusters, to function as prompters or handouts for such wandering radicals.

(2) The editing of such clusters into the Jewish-Christian Sayings Gospel Q took place at about the time of the fall of Jerusalem (70 C.E.).

(3) The first major part of the body of the Gospel of Matthew, chapters 3-11, into which the text of Q is largely compressed, was composed as a kind of rationale or justification for the Q community's having held out so long in its exclusively Jewish orientation.

(4) The complete adoption of the Gospel of Mark into the Gospel of Matthew, in chapters 12-28, reflected the reorientation of the Q community, now the Matthean community, into the worldwide mission of the gentile church, legitimized through the Great Commission to convert all nations, with which the canonical Gospel of Matthew closes.

Let me in conclusion speak briefly to each of these four stages that led from the real Jesus to the Christianity of which we are heirs:

(1) The collection of sayings of Jesus that in Luke 6 is called the Sermon on the Plain and in Matthew 5-7 the Sermon on the Mount is a very old collection originally composed as a unit in and of itself, with its own introduction, the Beatitudes, and its own conclusion, the twin parables of the houses built on rock or on sand. Between, in the body of the sermon, lie the sayings most characteristic of the real Jesus: those concerning love of enemies, turning the other cheek, giving the shirt off one's back, and forgiving debts. There was another such small collection on prayer, including the Lord's Prayer and its commentary about the father who gives to the asking son neither stones nor snakes. A third collection was about ravens and wildflowers. These three little clusters are so close to each other in meaning that the Matthean community put them all together, perhaps at a very early date, into what we know as the Sermon on the Mount. Then there was the collection of mission instructions, telling how the Q people were to carry out their

Jewish-Christian mission. It is these oldest collections of sayings of Jesus that produced the picture of the real Jesus that I described at the beginning of this presentation.

(2) The final editor of Q took sayings of Jesus that were still circulating, including these small clusters, and edited them in two regards: On the one hand, he superimposed on the Q material the Deuteronomistic view of history found in the Old Testament, according to which God lets Jerusalem be destroyed not because God is unfaithful but because Israel is, having rejected God's prophets, indeed having killed them, rather than listening to them. The final editor of Q thought history had in this regard repeated itself: Jesus' offer of salvation had been by and large rejected, and so God had abandoned again his house in Jerusalem and turned it over to the Romans to destroy. So Q pronounced judgment on "this generation." For its rejecting of Jesus, God was rejecting it.

But another concern of this editor of Q was more inner-Christian, namely, to reinterpret John's talk of a "Coming One" who would hold judgment to refer not directly to God, whom John must have intended, but rather to Jesus. The editor organized the first main section of Q around a cluster of predictions from Isaiah to the effect that the Coming One will heal many sicknesses and evangelize the poor. Between John's prediction of a Coming One and the claim that Jesus, having acted as Isaiah predicted, is that Coming One, lie the inaugural sermon, beginning "Blessed are the poor, for yours is the kingdom of God," in which the evangelizing of the poor is documented, and the healing of the centurion's boy at Capharnaum, one healing representative of all in the list of healings collected from Isaiah. This is Q's "proof" that Jesus is the Coming One prophesied by John as coming to hold judgment. And so God's judgment on Jerusalem at its destruction can be interpreted as retaliation for the rejection of Jesus' message by the Judaism of that time, "this generation."

This Sayings Gospel, organized in this way, may have converted a few followers of John but did not by any means effect the conversion of all of Israel, the impossibility of which is already writ large in the Sayings Gospel itself. The text ends with the reassurance to the disciples that they will, after all, judge the twelve tribes of Israel, even if they could not convert them. Yet this negative outcome is not the last word.

(3) The small and failing Q community knew about the much more successful gentile church. Such contacts would have emerged at the latest when the survivors of this Jewish-Christian community, which reached Antioch after the war, found there the gentile church. The community of the



Sayings Gospel Q, which had intensified over the years its Jewish-Christian exclusivity, had, perhaps quite haltingly, to modulate into the community of the Gospel of Matthew, which in effect ended up repudiating that exclusivity. But Matthew, before turning to the gentiles, produced an enlarged, improved, concentrated version of the first major section of Q, in which Jesus was proven to be the Coming One predicted by John, which one can still read in chapters 3-11 of the Gospel of Matthew. But this was in effect the swan song of the Q community, as it was absorbed into the gentile-Christian church, except for holdouts who returned to the baptist movement or to emergent normative Judaism, or became small Christian sects that we, on the winning side, call heresies: the Ebionites, meaning the "Poor," or the Nazarenes, claiming Jesus of Nazara.

(4) This belated self-justification of the survivors of the Q community in Matthew 3-11 did not succeed in forestalling the inevitable. So what was left of the Q community, absorbed into what we should now call the Matthean community, took over the gentile-Christian Gospel of Mark and copied it out pretty much by rote in Matthew 12-28, with only an occasional editing out of especially offensive gentile traits, finally justifying going over to the gentile side of Christianity with the Great Commission by the resurrected Christ to evangelize all nations, thus canceling Q's Jewish-Christian basis in a Jesus who limited his mission to Israel.

So Jewish Christianity ceased, for practical purposes, to exist as an independent entity. Yet the Jewish-Christian Gospel incorporated in Matthew as the last will and testament of the Q community made its way into the growing gentile church as a major part of the most widely used Gospel of all, the Gospel according to Matthew. So the real Jesus' actual sayings remained, in spite of everything, accessible. The church today can still listen to Jesus, which, in my opinion, is precisely what we should do. He is very unsettling, as I am sure you felt as I tried to present his sayings. But his goal of a caring, selfless society may be the best future we can hope for, and work for.

# Barren Rock, Central Plains, Island across the Strait: The Hong Kong-Mainland China-Taiwan Connection

by PETER K. H. LEE

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IT IS A DISTINCT honor for me to present this lecture. When in the mid-1960s I was pursuing my doctoral studies in the area of missions, ecumenics, and world religions at the Boston University School of Theology, one of the titles on the required reading list for the comprehensive examinations was John A. Mackay's *Ecumenics*. I remember that I read that book early in my doctoral program. It gave me an excellent orientation for my thinking on world mission with an ecumenical outlook and an open mind toward other religions. Subsequently, I learned that President Mackay was a distinguished theological educator with a missionary calling and ecumenical vision. What a privilege it is to fill the chair named in his honor, teaching, if only for a year, in this distinguished seminary, which still bears the marks of his influence!

## I. BY WAY OF METAPHORICAL LANGUAGE

The theme of this address is searching for spiritual-cultural treasures in a geographical and cultural complex linking Hong Kong, mainland China, and Taiwan. Because the terrain to be covered is extensive, an analytical approach would make a long speech; so I have chosen a more economical approach, using metaphorical language. A metaphor is a pictorial or symbolic representation of an otherwise complex subject with many-sided meanings. Metaphors have the advantage of engaging the attention right away and then gradually unfolding nuances of meaning. But a metaphor cannot analyze everything in an explicit manner; that is the limitation of metaphorical language. I will therefore supplement the metaphorical approach with discursive analysis.

Before proceeding, I should say a word more about metaphor. The subject of metaphor has in recent years received serious attention in academic circles not only among students of rhetoric but among scholars of religious language

as well.<sup>1</sup> It would take us far afield if we should allow ourselves to go into the intricate studies of the subject. Theories and definitions of metaphor are legion. Let me simply cite a succinct but clear working definition for a start: "Metaphor is that figurative way of speaking (and meaning) in which our reality, the Subject, is spoken of (and thought of) in terms that are more commonly associated with a different reality, the Symbol, which is related to it by Analogy."<sup>2</sup> With this audience I do not need to give further explanation. Please simply note the key terms—subject, symbol, and analogy—and I think you will follow me in my use of metaphors. As I go along I will make use of various forms of metaphor, and I will add explanations accordingly.

Besides using metaphorical language rather extensively, I need tools of critical analysis of society and culture. For this task, I get helpful hints from Jürgen Habermas' theory of communicative action. I also want to pursue a viable theological method, along the lines of David Tracy's thinking.

Let us get into the subject matter by first identifying the referents of the metaphors in the title: Barren Rock, Central Plains, and Island across the Strait.

The *Barren Rock* is Hong Kong. When in 1841, at the conclusion of the Opium War, Lord Palmerston, the British Foreign Secretary, was informed that his emissaries succeeded in getting the Chinese authorities to agree to cede Hong Kong to the British Empire as a colony in settlement of Britain's victory in the war, he sneered contemptuously, "[That] is hardly more than a barren rock . . . with hardly a house built on it."

Hong Kong was indeed a rocky, barren island. So, "barren rock" as applied to Hong Kong in the mid-nineteenth century was literally true. But half a century later, with Kowloon and the New Territory having been added to the colony in the meantime, that barren rock, on which no crops could be grown, began to assume the status of a thriving trading seaport, thanks to its excellent harbor. By mid-twentieth century, with the influx of refugees from China, there was a great rush to build houses, and when houses were not built fast enough, wooden shacks were put up on the hillsides as temporary shelters. In the 1970s and 1980s the building industry boomed more and more, along with other industries, so that Hong Kong became a prosperous cosmopolitan city. With full irony, that barren rock that had hardly a house on it in 1842 is, in

<sup>1</sup>The most useful book for understanding metaphor as literary rhetoric and religious language, containing papers by outstanding scholars of multiple disciplines, is Sheldon Sacks, ed. *On Metaphor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

<sup>2</sup>Peter W. Macky, *The Centrality of Metaphors to Biblical Thought* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1980), 57. For a scholarly review of recent studies on metaphor, this monograph furnishes useful materials.

1997, when Hong Kong is to be returned to China, strewn with thousands of high-rise apartment buildings and hundreds of commercial skyscrapers, some of world-class design, with 6¼ million people inhabiting and briskly doing business in those buildings.

Yet Hong Kong has been called a "cultural desert." A British colony from the earliest days, it was congenitally short on indigenous cultural roots, with foreign cultural elements that were products of colonization and, later on, imported commercial goods that were high in exchange value but low in intrinsic worth. The metaphor "barren rock" can still be used in the cultural sense. Here note the subtle shades of connotation of the metaphor—irony in one sense, with reference to the prosperity of Hong Kong in spite of its barren soil, and satire in another sense, with respect to Hong Kong's cultural barrenness in the midst of booming business.

The *Central Plains* refers to the great plains between the Yellow River and the Yangtze River. Both rivers traverse China, one more northern, the other more southern. The Yellow River Basin, near the middle, was the cradle of Chinese civilization six to eight millennia ago. Gradually a more advanced civilization developed in the eastern section as the river flows to the sea. In the western section, a more pastoral civilization flourished. In the meantime, farther down, north of the Yangtze River, where the soil is fertile, agricultural products were plentiful, and, the river facilitating transportation, trade and commerce thrived, especially toward the eastern coastal regions. What is known as the Central Plains, then, was the home base of a highly developed culture. The origin of the written language can be traced to 3,000 B.C.E. Over the centuries, great philosophical systems and literary masterpieces have come from these plains.

It is also on the Central Plains where the seats of political power have been located. The imperial capitals of various periods as well as the centers of the states contending for power are within the Central Plains. Hence the Central Plains also symbolize the center of political power. Beijing, the capital of the People's Republic of China, is within the Central Plains. The Hans are the dominant ethnic-cultural group, and they are apt to treat the other groups with condescension. True, the Mongols and the Manchurians ruled the empire at different periods, yet even the ruling houses were soon absorbed into Han culture. The Chinese empire, with Han culture dominating, was liable to take itself to be the center of the universe, considering all others as barbarians on the periphery.

The onslaught of foreign powers, and with that the impact of Western technology, gave China a severe jolt in the nineteenth century. Encouraged



by a Western liberal ideology, the Han Chinese, with Sun Yat-sen as the leader, overthrew the Manchurian dynasty, and with that the age-old imperial system ended. The newborn republican China, established in 1911, had to contend with problems created by the warlords; then, just when it began to build up a modern China, it was drawn into a ravaging war with Japan. The war ended, Communism triumphed, and it established the People's Republic of China in 1949. The new People's Republic was built on a totally foreign ideology, Marxism, and, armed with Leninist tactics grafted onto traditional Chinese despotic rule personified by Mao Zedong, it proceeded to sweep away all the old institutions and cultural heritage. More than that, in a decade-long so-called Cultural Revolution, an unruly hoard of "red guards," goaded by a sinister Gang of Four, ravaged the whole country, smashing everything that was considered to be a relic from the past. Meanwhile, the New China that was supposed to be was only built up economically when it adopted a market economy. The socialist label notwithstanding, present-day China is ideologically in disarray. With all norms of the past gone, and with Marxism having lost its legitimation, what is there to hold up the country morally and spiritually? In spite of fervent economic activities to make up for lost time, the Central Plains are a place of cultural and moral ruin. A few years ago, a novel titled *Fei-du* (City of Ruins), depicting the moral degradation and cultural barrenness of present-day China, became a best-seller, not because of its literary merits but on account of its realistic portrayals. "City of Ruins" is an apt metaphor for the wilderness in the Central Plains today.

*The island across the strait* is Taiwan. It is a geographical fact that Taiwan is an island across a strait, the Taiwan Strait, from mainland China. Yet historically, it was part of the Middle Kingdom, except for periods of colonization by Holland and Portugal (seventeenth century) and of occupation by Japan (1896-1945).

From the seventeenth century on, clans of Han people, the majority group on the mainland, started to move to Taiwan and became the dominant group there, making the indigenous peoples the minorities. The Hans were the major bearers of the culture of the Central Plains to Taiwan. But the strait separating the island from the mainland could not but have an isolating effect on the mentality of the Taiwanese. The instillation of Japanese culture during the period of the Japanese occupation of Taiwan had an alienating impact on the Central Plains culture transplanted there earlier. The alienation was exacerbated by a period of ruthless governorship set up by the Nationalist Government of the Republic of China after World War II. To complicate matters further, Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Government was exiled in

Taiwan in the wake of the Communist takeover of the mainland in 1949. To the Taiwanese people who had settled there for generations, this was tantamount to an invasion from the mainland Chinese rulers. The cleavage between the former and the latter has been deep. Until recently, the Nationalist Government in Taiwan thought of itself as the legitimate government of all of China.

This is completely opposite to what the Communist Government thinks. Its unquestionable presupposition is that the People's Republic of China has sovereignty over Taiwan. A movement is afoot to make Taiwan an independent state, which is anathema to the Chinese Communist rulers.

The cultural linkage between Taiwan and the mainland remains more enduring than the effects of violent political forces. After all, Central Plains culture has been transplanted on the island for several centuries. The exodus from Communist China consisted not only of politicians and the army but of intellectuals as well.

Nevertheless, the cultural scene on Taiwan is by no means vibrant. Part of the problem lies in the identity crisis of the people living in Taiwan. Without a proper identity, no people can be creative, culturally speaking.

The "strait" in the expression "the island across the strait" is laden with layers of metaphoric meaning—geographical, psychological, historical, political, and even military.

If Hong Kong, mainland China, and Taiwan can be said to form a connection, it is first of all because historically they were, tacitly at least, under one sovereignty, under the general name China (*Zhong Guo* in Chinese), though the connotation of that name is subject to varied interpretations. In the case of Hong Kong and the mainland, the relationship is clear: As of July 1, 1997 Hong Kong will come under the sovereignty of the People's Republic of China as a Special Administrative Region, although what exactly "Special Administrative Region" means has yet to evolve within the continuous negotiating process. By comparison, the relationship between the People's Republic of China and Taiwan is ridden with tensions.

Second, the Hong Kong-mainland China-Taiwan connection is peopled by the Chinese as the great majority. The name "Chinese" (meaning the Chinese people), is subject to argument. In the Chinese language, *Zhong-guo-ren* ("the people of the Middle Kingdom") is not universally accepted, especially by the people of Taiwan and overseas Chinese. An alternative is *Hua-ren*, meaning a people who inherit the same civilization having an origin in the Central Plains at one time, under a social configuration given the name

*Hua*. *Hua-ren* has a wider acceptance among Chinese across the world, but not all the groups like it. Fortunately in English, it is all right to use the name "Chinese" (not confined to the Hans).

Third, and for our discussion this is the most important point: What may be called the Chinese people, the majority, populating Hong Kong, mainland China, and Taiwan, are carriers of a civilization that had its origin in the Central Plains. To be sure, from the Central Plains not just one civilization grew. But there is a civilization that has left artifacts and a recorded language forming an identifiable stream of development that includes distinctive institutions and structures, modes of thinking and styles of life, art and writing, philosophies and religions. A vast complex, it can nevertheless be given the general name "Chinese Civilization."

Chinese civilization has a long history of several millennia, with its golden ages and low periods, but all in all it has a rich cultural heritage. This civilization still stands and will continue. At this point in history, if we look across the landscape that includes Hong Kong, mainland China, and Taiwan, we see a culturally barren rock, in spite of its material glitter; ruins all over the Central Plains of a giant nation that wants to be great again; and an island, isolated by a strait, quite confused about its cultural identity. The biblical metaphors "the wilderness," "the dry land," "the desert," and "the thirsty ground" (all found in Isaiah 35) strike home to those who read the Hong Kong-mainland China-Taiwan connection beneath the surface of material prosperity and power contention.

## II. THE PROPHETIC-APOCALYPTIC VISION OF ISAIAH 35

If we can look at Chinese civilization from a longer perspective, we cannot but believe that there must be spiritual and cultural resources buried under the wasteland. Later, we will see how these treasures can be recovered. Meanwhile, a passage like Isaiah 35 opens our eyes to new horizons:

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,  
 the desert shall rejoice and blossom;  
 like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly,  
 and rejoice with joy and singing. . . .  
 For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,  
 and streams in the desert;  
 the burning sand shall become a pool,  
 and the thirsty ground springs of water.

(vv. 1-2, 6-7)

These words from Isaiah were written in the second half of the eighth century B.C.E. to address a situation involving Israel, Judah, and other Near Eastern countries. Israel and Judah, already breaking up, were caught in the nexus of power plays among neighboring nations. Assyria was a powerful nation, subduing the smaller neighbors. Judah, frightened, sought appeasement with Assyria and in fact became its vassal state. Meanwhile, Israel joined Syria against Assyria for self-protection, thus betraying Judah. Isaiah spoke out against Judah as well as Israel for their disloyalty to God and for their betrayal of each other. He warned that disaster would strike Judah and Israel as well as the godless nations, large and small. Alliances based on expedience would not lead to enduring peace and sooner or later would backfire. Fortune amassed in real estate at the expense of the poor would end up benefitting no one. Luxury, complacency and pride would in the end bring downfall.

In earlier passages, Isaiah uses strong language to warn the nations on behalf of God:

Now the LORD is about to lay waste the earth and make it desolate,  
and he will twist its surface and scatter its inhabitants. . . .

The earth shall be utterly laid waste and utterly despoiled;  
for the LORD has spoken this word.

The earth dries up and withers,  
the world languishes and withers;  
the heavens languish together with the earth.

(24:1, 3-4)

All the while, Isaiah adjures the peoples to turn to God's righteous ways:

Come, let us go to the mountain of the LORD,  
to the house of the God of Jacob;  
that he may teach us his ways  
and that we may walk in his paths.

(2:3)

There might still be storms and tempests ahead, but:

See, a king will reign in righteousness,  
and princes will rule with justice.  
Each will be like a hiding place from the wind,  
a covert from the tempest,  
like streams of water in a dry place,  
like the shade of a great rock in a weary land.

(32:1-2)



To pick up Isaiah 35 again, the prophet speaks these words of encouragement to the feeble and incapacitated:

Strengthen the weak hands,  
and make firm the feeble knees.

Say to those who are of a fearful heart,

“Be strong, do not fear!

Here is your God.

He will come with vengeance,  
with terrible recompense.

He will come and save you.”

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,

and the ears of the deaf unstopped,

then the lame shall leap like a deer,

and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.

(vv. 3-4)

No longer will the people be wandering in a trackless land, but God will prepare a way:

A highway shall be there,

and it shall be called the Holy Way;

the unclean shall not travel on it,

but it shall be for God’s people.

(v. 8)

Those who have gone astray and those who are in captivity will be welcomed back:

. . . the redeemed shall walk there.

And the ransomed of the Lord shall return,

and come to Zion with singing;

everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;

they shall obtain joy and gladness,

and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

(vv. 9-10)

The prophet Isaiah is projecting an apocalyptic future using very rich metaphors. We can call his vision prophetic-apocalyptic. It is a vision to be realized in the future while it brings judgment to the present. The metaphors Isaiah uses convey what may be called a “rhetoric of apocalyptic consciousness.” Such rhetoric is accompanied by judgment of the present, without

abdicating a better future. As one writer puts it, "a minimum 'apocalyptic consciousness' rooted in metaphor will include apocalyptic challenge to the status quo, explosive intensification, negativity, and hope for a new 'not-yet' future. . . . [The] presence of an 'apocalyptic consciousness' negates the pretense of the arrogant certainty of all claims to total adequacy."<sup>3</sup> But the best is yet to be.

Apocalyptic rhetoric thrives in times of crisis. Isaiah prophesied in a time of crisis. The powerful nations enjoyed their aggrandizement. The smaller nations thought that they could secure peace by subservient appeasement or expedient alliance. But all were fooling themselves. Morally and spiritually they were undergoing a crisis.

At the time of Isaiah, Chinese civilization was also quite advanced, but it was very different and geographically distant from the biblical world of Isaiah's day. Nevertheless, a passage like Isaiah 35 can speak to the Chinese of today. The Chinese people in the Hong Kong-mainland China-Taiwan connection are busy in their pursuits—to amass more and more money, to rely on power to maintain their authority, and to play all kinds of clever tricks to survive, to win, or to assert themselves. But they find no peace. Morally they are on the brink of bankruptcy, and spiritually they are dried up. They are heading for a crisis. The kind of prophetic-apocalyptic vision we behold in Isaiah 35 is what the people in the Chinese world need. But the message needs to be translated into their context.

### III. MOVING INTO THE HONG KONG-MAINLAND CHINA-TAIWAN CONNECTION

We now want to move from the biblical world back into the Chinese people's situation. How? This is a question of theological method.

#### *A. The Prophet's Profound Concern for the Covenanted People*

I speak as a Christian; it is not enough to speak as an individual, however, and I long to speak in the company of those who have a similar concern. Together with others who share the same point of view, I start by invoking the prophet's deep concern for the covenanted people of God.

All prophets in the Old Testament are moved by a profound concern for God's people at a time of crisis. The people have entered into a covenant with God that they shall abide by the divine will, and the covenant has its

<sup>3</sup>Rodney Kennedy, *The Creative Power of Metaphor: A Rhetorical Homiletics* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1993), 76–77.

expectations and promises. When the people backslide, then the prophet steps in. Out of deep concern, he utters stern words of warning, speaking on behalf of God. He also sees the way for salvation for the people. It may be a long time before they will catch on. The prophet will make known the vision anyway; it is not his private vision but one that is given by God on high. Isaiah was such a prophet par excellence, and we call attention to his anguish over the destiny of the people. By the people, he means not only the chosen people of Israel but all the other nations if only they will turn to God.

I do not need to say anything more about the prophets in days of old; what I want to see is that there are enough professed Christian believers who have the prophets' concern for the people, in this instance, the Chinese people in the situations of which I am speaking. There are no small number of those who would identify themselves as Christians (Protestants or Catholics) in the Chinese connection—half a million in Hong Kong, 15 to 20 million in China and still growing, 600,000 in Taiwan, though in each case they are still small minorities. We do not expect the whole multitude to be prophets; if only a fraction will echo the prophetic words and act accordingly, that is already a powerful witness.

I know the Hong Kong situation best, so permit me to tell the Hong Kong story. Most of the pulpits preach an individualistic salvation message, and the majority of the churches are mainly shelters from the great stormy sea. Only a small band of Chinese pastors and articulate laypeople, mostly younger in age, are distressed about the strong hand of interference from China to retard the growth toward greater democratization. They make enough noise to make a few of the older church folk think a little more, while they are considered to be a nuisance by those upholding the status quo. This shows the goading effect of a united stand with something of a prophetic protest. Yet, if I may say so, these people are acting more out of an ideological orientation, a liberal-democratic ideological orientation, than from a biblically rooted prophetic spirituality. Older than most of them, I wish I could lend more moral support to these younger liberal-minded activists. Again I feel too much alone to be of use; I am eager to work with a few more who are rooted in the spirituality of the Old Testament prophets.

#### *B. "You-bwan" Consciousness in the Confucian Tradition*

Christians are not the only ones who care about the destiny of the nation or a people. Thank goodness there is in the Confucian tradition what is called *you-bwan* consciousness. It is a consciousness that arises from a profound concern, to the point of sorrow, over the crisis the nation is going through and

is at the end commitment to positive action. The concept was brought home to me by a group of "New Confucians," especially Ch'ien Mu and Mou Tsung-san, who had fled to Hong Kong from Communist China.<sup>4</sup> They were deeply concerned about the fate of Chinese civilization. From them I learned that *you-hwan* consciousness is traceable to King Wan and the Duke of Zhou, the authors of the *I-Ching*, a classic of Chinese wisdom. Rereading more Chinese classics, I have discovered that this profound, sorrowful sense of concern for national destiny, coupled with hopeful action, is ingrained in the best of the sages. Mencius had it. Fan Zhongyuan, the scholar-statesman of the Song dynasty, made famous the saying "To be first under Heaven worrying [about the welfare of the nation], to be the last under Heaven to enjoy happiness." It is scholar-sages like these who have demonstrated that Confucianism at its best is not dry pedantry but is linked with public responsibility. Both Taiwan and mainland China nowadays witness a revival of interest in Confucianism, and so-called New Confucianism, which had a base in Hong Kong, is now further developed in Taiwan and is spreading to China. If among these scholars there is more of an expression of *you-hwan* consciousness, there is hope yet for the future of Chinese civilization. That opens the door for Christian prophetism to enter in too.

By the way, *you-hwan* is the very Chinese word that is used to render "sorrow" in the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 as the "man of sorrows." At a meeting on Confucianism and Christianity, I once correlated the sage of *you-hwan* consciousness with the Suffering Servant, and then a scholar on Confucianism, William Theodore de Bary, said that my correlation was most interesting but the Suffering Servant has more *angst* than does the Confucian sage's *you-hwan* consciousness.

### C. Jesus' Weeping over Jerusalem

De Bary's comment on the Suffering Servant suggests to me the typical Confucian's mentality in accepting the terribleness of the cross of Jesus. I had thought that there would be a bar to Confucian-Christian communication on that very point until I saw two prominent, scholarly Chinese gentlemen publicly weeping over a national tragedy. After the Tiananmen Square incident of June 4, 1989, in which hundreds of Chinese students were killed by tanks and machine guns, an eminent historian in the University of Hong Kong wept irrepressibly at the lectern as he spoke; also, a well-known

<sup>4</sup>In a series of articles in *Hsin Min Chu* (New Democracy) in 1957, published in Hong Kong.



journalist-novelist, appearing in a television interview, spoke chokingly of the tragedy. I myself choked as I preached the following Sunday, recalling the tragedy. From then on, I have had no difficulty in talking to Chinese intellectuals and scholars about Jesus' weeping over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41). That incident shows me how authentically human Jesus was in his sorrowful concern over the folly of the people who should have known better. It is this authentic humanness of Jesus that can communicate to the Chinese intelligentsia better than apologetic arguments—assuming we have a common concern!

#### *D. An Approach to Crisis in the Chinese People's World*

What is the common concern? Concern over crises in the Chinese people's world. Crises indeed there are in that world. The later sections will consider them. At this point, I will demonstrate an approach to these crisis situations.

In chapter 1 of his book *Legitimation Crisis*, Jürgen Habermas explains how he understands the concept of crisis.<sup>5</sup> He says that in medical usage crisis refers to the phase of an illness in which it is to be decided whether or not the organism's self-healing powers are sufficient for recovery. In one sense the critical process is seen as something objective, as if the patient's consciousness played no part in it. However, when medically it is a question of life and death, can the crisis be separated from the viewpoint of the one who is undergoing it? Probably not, unless the patient is condemned to passivity, deprived of the possibility of being a subject in full possession of his or her powers. If we are moving to the area of drama-liturgy, crisis signifies the turning point in an unfolding process, in which, for all the objective elements, the identity of the protagonists is caught up.

Habermas goes on to develop his systems-theoretical concept of crisis as applied to sociological analysis. To reduce his elaborate theory to a few words, society is like an organism in which the identities of subjects have their being. The subjects are involved in systems, and systems include subjects with identities, while objective factors are at work. A social organism requires a constant adjustment and readjustment of systems and identities, objective structures and the identities of the subjects. A crisis occurs when the structure of a social system allows fewer possibilities for problem solving than are necessary to the continued existence of the system. A society involves not just a social system but a complex of systems and subsystems, not just subjects with a simple identity but a multitude of life worlds. No wonder systems analyses of social crises are complicated processes.

<sup>5</sup>Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon, 1995), 1-5.

Habermas introduces the concept of the dialectic between systems and life worlds.<sup>6</sup> The life world is the locus of moral-practical knowledge or relations of meaning shared in families and workplaces (private) and in political actions and opinions (public). It is coordinated toward reaching self- and mutual understanding. In contrast, political (states) and economic (market) systems are coordinated through the steering media of money and power. The political and administrative systems are apt to resort to performances abstracted from life-world contexts. Systems imperatives, as directed through the media of money and power, can frustrate life-world potentials and exacerbate life-world tensions. When conflicts between increasingly complex media-steered systems and a rationalized life world become intense, two unfortunate results follow: a loss of freedom and a loss of meaning. If the life world's impingement by the systems is too repressive, culture languishes and may even die on the vine. For when freedom is minimized and meaning is lost, culture and ethos shrivel up. A crisis is imminent.

However, is the patient going to die? Or is the patient, with residual power still in conscious control and with sufficient resources in the body organism, going to recover? The rest of this address will argue that the patient will recover; or to return to the metaphor of Isaiah 35, the dry land will blossom, and blossom abundantly.

### *E. Tapping "Root Metaphors" for Public Discourse*

The prophet, with profound concern, and the Confucian sage, with *you-hwan* consciousness, as team physicians if you will, putting their sensitive fingers on the pulse, detect that there are enough life resources in the patient; and they believe in the patient's capacity for recovery. But the physicians need fine tools to diagnose the illness more accurately. These they may find in the sociological-analytical theories of Jürgen Habermas.

Habermas is not only concerned with sociological diagnosis but is interested in healing action too. That is the burden of his theory of communicative action, which he elaborates in a two-volume work and numerous papers. We cannot go into a discussion of those writings. Suffice it to say here that I have learned from him that effective communication is a two-way, intersubjective discourse, which if competently done, leads to action, conflict-resolving or integrating action. Ethical and value consensus can emerge from rationally persuasive discourses. I myself have come to a

<sup>6</sup>The exposition in this paragraph is indebted to Nancy S. Love, "What's Left of Marx?" in *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas*, ed. Stephen K. White (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 46-66.

stage of intellectual inquiry and cross-cultural communication where I like to be engaged in civilized discourse with the significant other.

At this point, David Tracy comes to my aid. In my work I have been using metaphorical language and have been actively engaged in interreligious dialogue. What I have been practicing is confirmed by David Tracy's theological method. David Tracy acknowledges we are living in a culturally and religiously pluralistic world. Highly trained in fundamental theology in the classical tradition, he nevertheless eschews a one-sided preoccupation with an exclusively Western theological mode. His *The Analogical Imagination* shows his grounding in Thomistic theology (relying heavily on the analogical method) and his freedom to use imagination in theological thinking (for instance, by using metaphors). In fact, he becomes so interested in metaphorical language that he looks to "root metaphors" in religious traditions and cultural systems as the key to interreligious dialogue and cross-cultural communication. Root metaphors include major symbols, archetypal myths, and classic texts.<sup>7</sup> Tracy has personally become interested in interreligious dialogue and faith-culture encounters.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, he wants dialogues, encounters, and exchanges to be conducted in the public arena, that is, society, the academy, and the church. What is the end of public discourses? That the participants may influence each other and learn from each other, and it is up to the individual participants as well as the ones in the audience to make their rational choices. In the meantime, the whole ethos of a society is enriched.

Let us now go into further explorations into the Chinese spiritual-cultural world to see whether treasures can be recovered and rediscovered by means of root metaphors in the Chinese heritage as well as in biblical tradition.

#### IV. SPIRITUAL-CULTURAL RESOURCES AMID THE POLITICO-ECONOMIC MAZE

##### *A. Culture in the Politico-Economic Maze*

Hong Kong has been called an economic miracle. A small place of four hundred square miles with a population of 6¼ million, it is teeming with economic energies, achieving the second highest per capita income in Asia,

<sup>7</sup>See Tracy, "Metaphor and Religion: The Test Case of Christian Texts," in *On Metaphor*, ed. Sheldon Sacks; and idem, "Theology, Critical Social Theory, and the Public Realm" in *Habermas, Modernity, and Public Theology*, ed. D. S. Browning and Francis Schüssler Fiorenza (New York: Crossroad, 1992). The latter article assimilates Habermas' thought.

<sup>8</sup>Tracy, *Dialogue with the Other: The Interreligious Dialogue* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990).

next to Japan. The per capita income figure is misleading, however, for it hides the immense disparity between the rich and the poor. Among the fifty richest persons in the world as surveyed by *Forbes* magazine, every year in the past ten years, three or four have been from Hong Kong. Yet from a social-studies survey, 10 percent of the population lives below the poverty line. Social-welfare assistance is meager, despite a huge fiscal surplus that would make a First World nation envious. There is as yet no old-age pension program, except for civil servants. It does not require careful sociological studies to know that human alienation exists.

It is in the housing situation that human alienation, the result of economic exploitation, is most acute. Land is scarce to begin with, and real estate developers know how to control the market to yield the largest gains. With the back-handed encouragement of the government,<sup>9</sup> property developers invest much, but they obtain manifold returns. Home owners pay a high price not only in terms of money but also in terms of quality of life. The size of an apartment for the average family, not to speak of the low-income bracket, is smaller than you who are accustomed to living conditions in America can ever imagine. For that small apartment the wage-earning members of the family pay as much as 60 to 70 percent of their combined earnings. In this kind of society, where energy is expended to be exploitative and used up by the exploited to survive, where is energy left for fulfilling cultural activity? Where is the space for cultural creativity?

The economic scene in Hong Kong will not likely change after Hong Kong returns to China. China does not want it to change. The moneyed class does not want any change. The political elites do not want any change. The Chinese government and the rich and powerful people of Hong Kong actually want a change for the better, for themselves first of all, and they will see to it that such change will happen.

In political terms, the "high degree of autonomy" that Hong Kong is supposed to enjoy will mean that the rich *taipans* (moguls), with patting on the back from the ones in power in the central government of China, will steer the official courses. This is a classic case of Habermas' thesis that power and money are the steering forces behind the systems to enmesh the life world.

<sup>9</sup>The government, which owns all the land in Hong Kong, has a clever way of controlling the supply of land by releasing land lot by lot at calculated times in return for a "premium." The premium amount for a choice lot is determined by auction. The property developers, usually financial conglomerates, bid for the premium price. Because profit from housing development can be enormous, and, by government control, land supply is scarce, the auctioneering pushes the price sky-high. The government, of course, reaps great benefit from this. The developers do not mind paying the high premium, which is absorbed as a cost and later charged to the home buyers.



The ones in power in China will hang on to power as long as they can. This means they will rule with complete control and will not tolerate dissident views.

Officially, China still claims to hold on to socialism, and if that is true, it is socialism in the sense of concentration of political power; but in the economic sphere, for all intents and purposes China is taking to the capitalist road, or, in the language of economics, adopting a market economy, with increasing success. However, the marriage of money and control compounds power, which breeds corruption and shrinks freedom. Actually in the people's minds, the official claims about socialism have lost their legitimacy.

Taiwan is doing well economically too, thanks to its fertile soil, the ingenuity and industry of the people, and a workable economic system where free enterprise is complemented by government regulation. However, corruption is prevalent. And Nationalist Party investment in the economy is subject to abuse and in fact upsets a fair distribution of democratic power.

After almost four decades of single-party monopoly, Taiwan now permits multiparty politics. The strongest opposition party, the Democratic Progressive Party, is at present only a shade behind the Nationalist Party in power. Progress in political democratization is remarkable, but it has been bought at the high price of intense strife. Presidential and legislative elections are now open to universal franchise.

In relation to mainland China, the Democratic Progressive Party advocates a self-determination policy, which in effect pushes for Taiwanese independence. Although the Nationalist Party does not use the same rhetoric, it is in effect moving closer and closer to the same position. All this is unacceptable to the People's Republic of China.

Taiwan wants to trade in the huge mainland market. The People's Republic of China reacts to this desire with caution, what with the tense political relationship between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait. There are at present only limited cultural exchanges across the strait.

Taiwan's biggest problem is its identity crisis. This is true in the political sense. It is also true in the cultural sense. In this light, though there is room for cultural creativity, it is difficult to achieve cultural integrity and integration, and at best only fragmentary results appear.

On the mainland, the identity problem is even more acute. Morally, ideologically, and spiritually, it is reaching a critical point. Even if spurts of cultural activity are on display here and there, the masses as well as the cultural elites have yet to find their orientation. Failures of nerve and loss of motivation are common social phenomena. The swelling attendance in

Christian churches is a sign of the people's spiritual hunger. The churches may be able to provide spiritual sustenance to some extent, but on the whole, they are unprepared to deal with cultural and intellectual issues.

Interestingly, in certain intellectual pursuits and artistic activities, people on the mainland welcome input from the outside, including Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Western countries. China is not without talents and scholars, but because of the aridity of the whole country, the talented and intellectual ones are thirsty for knowledge and spirituality. Having been cut off from the rest of the world for too long, they are groping for direction and find contact with the outside world stimulating. In the areas of social, religious, and theological studies, for instance, there is space for scholars and thinkers from Hong Kong and Taiwan to come in for mutual exchanges—if they have significant things to offer.

With this in view, I envision public discussions that can be stimulated by holding up several pairs of metaphors (as symbolic representations or basic texts). This kind of procedure can be conducive to what Habermas calls communicative competence, that is, effective communication through interaction leading to action.

#### *B. Adam Smith and Karl Marx*

The first pair of metaphors is taken from Adam Smith's *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* and from Karl Marx's *Das Kapital*. The metaphor from Smith is the invisible hand guiding the interplay of demand and supply in a free market to fix prices, rents, and wages. The basic text from Marx is his labor theory of value, by which, simply stated, Marx claims to debunk the capitalist market economy. The Hong Kong economy thrives on Smith's model of the free market. Marx acknowledges the metaphor of the invisible hand and alludes to it as the mechanism showing the instability of a capitalist system that must end in collapse. In the wake of the People's Republic of China's adoption of the market economy model, no one is interested in a Smith-Marx debate on the invisible hand operating in a nineteenth-century world. Yet I understand that there are still Marxist economists in the universities of China, and certainly there are theoretical economists in the universities of Hong Kong. At the threshold of the twenty-first century, it would not be irrelevant to have open discussions on the market economy, as symbolized by the invisible hand, among serious economists from Hong Kong, mainland China, and the West.

With reference to Adam Smith and Karl Marx, there could be useful

discussion in a related area: human nature and public morality. Smith, as we know, posits self-interest as the motivating force making the market economy work. But few people know that Smith actually understands human nature in broader terms than self-interest only. In another book, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (which is three times as thick as *The Wealth of Nations*), Smith discusses at length the intricate structure of human nature. He allows ample scope for virtue, duty, justice, and moral sentiment to find expression in society. Marx, of course, has a powerful message, and his analysis of human alienation in a capitalist society is penetrating. In an article entitled "What's Left of Marx," Nancy S. Love points out that according to Habermas' interpretation, the possibilities of "actually existing socialism" are exhausted, but "socialism as critique" remains a source of hope.<sup>10</sup>

It would be an important occasion if Marxist economists and sociologists from mainland China could go to capitalist Hong Kong to have public discussions with their counterparts there on the issues of human nature and public morality. Furthermore, if Christian ethicists and theologians were to take part in the discussion, all would have a field day considering ethical questions and issues of human motivation in the nexus of contemporary economics and society. But lamentably few are the professed Christian men and women in Hong Kong, mainland China, and Taiwan who could participate in high-level discussions with economists and other social scientists.

### C. *Da-tung* (Grand Unity) and *Xiao-kang* (Lesser Prosperity)

I will press for a second pair of metaphors, this time from Chinese antiquity. The metaphors are in the form of two short but powerful texts found in *Li-zhi* (The Book of Rites), an ancient classic, in the chapter called "*Li-yun*" (Evolution of Rites). The two texts are "*Da-tung*" (Grand Unity) and "*Xiao-kang*" (Lesser Prosperity).<sup>11</sup> Though these are ancient texts, they are well known. Most people at least know the words *da-tung* and *xiao-kang*.

After a one-sentence introduction recalling the ideal past, "*Da-tung*" begins: "When the Great Way was practiced, the world was shared by all alike."<sup>12</sup> Then follow characterizations of the features of a society of Grand Unity:

<sup>10</sup>Love, "What's Left of Marx?" 46-66.

<sup>11</sup>The translated texts are found in William Theodore de Bary, Wing-tsit Chan, and Burton Watson, comps., *Sources of Chinese Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), 1:175-76.

<sup>12</sup>The words "The World was Shared by All," in Chinese characters, *Tian-xia wei-gong* (All under Heaven for the Common Good [that is the way I would render it in English]), are

The worthy and the able were promoted to office and men practiced good faith and lived in affection.

They did not regard as parents only their own parents, or as sons, only their sons.

The aged found a fitting close to their lives, the robust their proper employment; the young were provided with an upbringing and the widow and widower, the orphaned and the sick, with proper care.

Men had their tasks and women their hearths.

They hated to see goods lying about in waste, yet they did not hoard them for themselves; they disliked the thought that their energies were not fully used, yet they used them not for private ends.

Therefore all evil plotting was prevented and thieves and rebels did not arise, so that people could leave their outer gates unbolted.

Is "*Da-tung*" too utopian? Yes, although some measures are already realizable in this day and age, like care for the aged, the needy, and the young. Some of the social-welfare provisions are based on a realistic understanding of normal human life, like the goodness of employment, warmth in the home, and election of the worthy and able to public office. Other assumptions are more idealistic, like erasing family differentiation and the natural unselfishness of people. Where "*Da-tung*" is not beyond the reach of realizability, as an utopian ideal it is a useable measuring stick for a good society. Using such a measuring stick, Hong Kong, mainland China, and Taiwan all fall short in notable respects: the inadequacy of social welfare in Hong Kong (notwithstanding a huge government surplus every year) and in China, though a professed socialist state; lack of democracy in these places; corruption and unfair balance of political power in Taiwan.

"*Xiao-kang*" (Lesser Prosperity), which is placed side by side with "*Da-tung*" of the golden past, is meant to be a contrast. It begins with the words: "Now the Great Way has become hid and the world is the possession of private families." It implies that *xiao-kang* is a step backward. The "now" signifies the present age.

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inscribed on a plaque hanging over the gate to the magnificent Sun Yat-sen Memorial built on a hill in Nanjing. Sun Yat-sen, the father of the Republic of China, frequently talked about those words from "*Da-tung*" as his motto. He is to this day universally revered by Chinese people everywhere. This shows that the "*Da-tung*" ideal is deeply rooted in the Chinese people's collective unconscious.



With the receding of the Great Way, regulations, rituals, and law are instituted. A merit system is set up. Family loyalty is clearly demarcated. Yet in actual society are not these institutions necessary? This is where "*Xiao-kang*" is more realistic than "*Da-tung*." I like to think of "*Xiao-kang*" on certain matters as a needed corrective to the excessive idealism of "*Da-tung*."

Of course, humanity can become so degenerate that selfishness and family-centeredness, greed and aggression do prevail. Then rituals, laws, and institutions are necessary evils, if you will. But is there no place for morality and virtue to develop? Morality and law, virtue and institution, freedom and ritual—these need not be mutually exclusive.

The juxtaposition of "*Da-tung*" and "*Xiao-kang*" can provide the occasion for debate on the realizability of the Good Society. It would make for a philosophical debate on the ideal and the realistic. It would make for a debate on social philosophy. And it could feed into a good theological discussion.

As in economics, so in social philosophy, are there Christian people who can rise up and be counted on what they have to say in public? In Hong Kong, Taiwan, and mainland China, Christians well trained in social philosophy and political theology are scarce. In some practical matters, though, for example, social-welfare legislation and budget allocation, there are experienced Hong Kong social workers whose expert opinions may count. I am told that in Taiwan there are church people, especially in the Presbyterian Church, who have on occasion made a significant social witness. The People's Republic of China has the People's Consultative Conferences, where religious representatives participate, although the scope of their activities is limited.

#### *D. Isaiah 65 and 61*

I now introduce two chapters from the Book of Isaiah as the third pair of metaphors for discourse or reflection in public. These chapters belong to what is called Third Isaiah's writings. Third Isaiah prophesied during the first half of the sixth century B.C.E. It was a period when the first wave of exiles from Babylon was returning to Jerusalem and the work on the second temple was in progress. The land was still in ruins, however. Reconstruction of a new community was by no means easy. Difficulties with the Canaanites, Egyptians, and other groups were encountered. The Israelites were disheartened. Nevertheless, the situation was not hopeless, as Third Isaiah saw it. He had many oracles to give hope to the people. Isaiah 65 is one of those marvelous

oracles. It is not merely high sounding; it is down-to-earth:

They shall build houses and inhabit them;  
 They shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.  
 They shall not build and another inhabit;  
 They shall not plant and another eat;  
 for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be,  
 and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.  
 They shall not labor in vain,  
 or bear children for calamity;  
 for they shall be offspring blessed by the LORD—  
 and their descendants as well.

(vv. 21-23)

This oracle sounds strangely close to the "*Da-tung*" ideal. Here is a chance for a writer or thinker well versed in the scriptures to join in with a Chinese scholar to speak of the ideal society and to let that ideal or vision, from both Isaiah 65 and "*Da-tung*," be a guide for actual performance.

Isaiah 61 is another memorable oracle. When Jesus began his ministry, he quoted the first few lines of this Isaiah passage (Luke 4:18-19):

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,  
 because the LORD has anointed me;  
 he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,  
 to bind up the brokenhearted,  
 to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
 and release to the prisoners;  
 to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor.

The prophet, anointed by the Lord God, has a message to give and has loving care especially for the oppressed, the brokenhearted, captives, and prisoners. He stands on the side of the lowly and neglected. Jesus does the same, making a preferential choice to be on the side of the poor and oppressed. That is the way to realize God's righteousness; that is the way divine righteousness works.

They will be called oaks of righteousness,  
 the planting of the LORD to display his glory.  
 They shall build up the ancient ruins,  
 they shall raise up the former devastations;  
 they shall repair the ruined cities,  
 the devastations of many generations.

(Isa. 61:4)

The prophet then proclaims:

I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,  
 my whole being shall exult in my God;  
 for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,  
 he has covered me with the robe of righteousness. . . .

For as the earth brings forth its shoots,  
 and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,  
 so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise  
 to spring up before all the nations.

(Isa. 61:10-11)

Christians can join others in discussion of the Ideal or Good Society, while they realize that as a matter of fact there are the poor and the oppressed, captives and prisoners in our midst. The followers of Jesus should be the first ones to know, and like Jesus and the prophet Isaiah, they have the good news to tell. If they get the message across, first to the lowly and the deprived, and through them to the rest, they mediate the righteousness of God. Then the earth brings forth shoots and blossoms, and the people come alive praising God's righteousness and mercy.

#### V. THE PHILOSOPHICAL/THEOLOGICAL BASIS OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Hong Kong, that barren rock that was ceded to Britain as a colony after the Opium War, was barren in that the soil was actually not fertile and no highly developed culture had been planted there. It is still barren culturally if we are thinking in terms of what is uplifting and creative. To be sure, when the British colonialists came, they transported their culture. The Chinese who migrated there also brought certain cultural heritages. Other cultural elements were also imported, and trade and commerce developed.

Other than commercial success and material progress, Hong Kong does have culture, even worthy culture. If I may be allowed to indulge in metaphorical language, treasure chests have been washed ashore on the sandy beaches.

##### *A. Treasures Washed Ashore*

(1) *Treasure Chest 1: The Rule of Law.* Say what you will about British colonialism, the British colonialists brought to Hong Kong the valuable asset

of the rule of law, with an independent judicial system to uphold it. Even in the pragmatic business world, it is a common understanding that one of the pillars holding up the edifice of economic success in Hong Kong is the rule of law. Without it, not only would the business world crumble, but orderly living in day-to-day activities would run afoul, victims of injustice would have no court to appeal to, and human rights would not be safeguarded. What is of singular importance is that the judicial system that has been at work in the colony for over a century is relatively independent of executive interference and political bias. The rule of law inherited from the British is not perfect, but that chest contains treasures, and let us treasure them, polishing them up even more if we can, and mending the pieces that are broken.

(2) *Treasure Chest 2: Christianity*. Christianity was brought to China from the West. The first Protestant missionary to China, Robert Morrison, landed in Hong Kong in 1807, even before colonization. Later, more missionaries came. Christian missionaries have been charged with being accomplices of Western imperialism. Say that if you want to, but it is also an indisputable fact that missionaries did much to alleviate human suffering, like opening hospitals, establishing orphanages, and working to abolish such inhumane practices as the domestic slave-girl system and foot-binding custom. It was the missionaries who planted the first churches. Again, you can criticize the missionaries for importing Western forms of Christianity, and there is some truth to that charge. But were it not for the missionaries, there would not have been Christianity in Hong Kong, or in China or Taiwan. They sowed the seeds of the gospel.

Let me recall an early attempt to Sinicize the Christian gospel by a missionary working with a Chinese pastor. The missionary was James Legge; the Chinese pastor, Ho Fok-tong. Legge, A Scotsman, came to Hong Kong in 1842, first to be headmaster of an Anglo-Chinese School for boys and then to found the Hong Kong Union Church. While pastoring the congregation, he worked at translating the Chinese classics into English, with the help of Chinese scholars. His translation of the Chinese classics, in five thick volumes, stands as a monument to cross-cultural fertilization. In the meantime, he baptized a graduate of the Anglo-Chinese School, Ho Fok-tong, and together they copastored the Union Church, one serving the English-speaking congregation, the other the Chinese-speaking congregation. Ho was one of the earliest Chinese pastors to work toward the Sinicization of Christianity. That Chinese congregation became the Chinese Hop Yat Church (Union Church), which still stands as an important church in Hong Kong. So, in treasure chest number 2, Christianity, can be found the two



Union Churches, one English, one Chinese, representing the work of James Legge and Ho Fok-tong, in their joint efforts to sow the seed of the gospel and nurture the young plant in indigenous soil.

(3) *Treasure Chest 3: New Confucianism.* A British colony, Hong Kong was born with a congenital deficiency in the scanty Chinese cultural heritage. Yet, by the irony of history, a noteworthy school of Confucian thought, called New Confucianism, drifted ashore on this culturally arid place. From 1949 to the early 1950s, a group of Confucian scholars in their prime fled from Communist China to Hong Kong. They were disciples of important Neo-Confucian scholars in China, particularly Hsiung Shih-li and Liang Sou-ming, who had begun to forge new ideas. The younger scholars, especially Mou Tsung-san, Tang Chun-i and Chien-mu, landing in Hong Kong, gathered around them young intellectuals and students who had also fled to Hong Kong. Soon, the scholars started a college, with Chinese history and culture in the core curriculum and eager students in attendance. The mentors began to work out their own thoughts, taking into serious account the new environment confronted by Chinese culture and assimilating Western philosophical thought like that of Kant and Hegel. In time, a new school of Neo-Confucianism emerged, whose thought came to be called New Confucianism. What is "new" about this school of thought is the belief that Chinese civilization, with Confucianism as the mainstream, will be able to withstand the challenges of the twentieth century, assimilating in the meantime Western philosophical and social thoughts where appropriate. Whether New Confucianism can fulfill such an ambitious mandate is too big a question to take up here, but certainly it is a noble attempt to recover the Confucian heritage and to remold it to suit the modern age. It is from the New Confucian scholars that I first took to heart the *you-hwan* consciousness I referred to earlier, and through this consciousness I myself reentered the Chinese heritage to see what could be recovered and rediscovered. New Confucianism still thrives in Hong Kong, with New Asia College as the base. New Confucianism seems to find even more fertile soil in Taiwan (one of the early teachers went there), and it now has proponents teaching in universities in the United States.

(4) *Treasure Chest 4: Liberal Democracy.* Hong Kong had no democracy to speak of until the last decade, and even that has been democracy at a minimum. Starting in the 1980s, the district boards and the City Council members have been elected by voters in districts. By the late 1980s, one third of the Legislative Council members were elected by popular vote and another third by functional constituencies, and the rest were administrative appoin-

tees. The Basic Law for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region provides a gradual increase of democratic representation until the year 2007, when it can be determined whether from then on all the Legislative Councillors will be popularly elected. When Christopher Patten was appointed by the Queen to be the Governor of Hong Kong in 1992, he sought to hasten the process of democratization by enlarging the base of the popular franchise. But that was met with a strong rebuttal from the Chinese government, which subsequently delayed the progression toward democratization even more than what was agreed upon. The Chinese authorities have the status quo politicians and financial sectors on their side. But such a political bag is not what is in treasure chest 4. The contents of this treasure chest are the liberal elements, which will liberalize the political process, and such elements are present in Hong Kong society at large if not so much within the establishment. Hong Kong permits multiparty politics, and one of the largest parties is the Democratic Party, which is the most liberal of all the parties. Members of the Democratic Party, and others too, have an ideology that is typical of Western democratic liberalism, very much based on individualism, popular representation, majority rule, and the like. This kind of liberalism, as an ideological stance, is unacceptable to Chinese Communism and is still somewhat foreign to the Chinese mentality. It will be a long time before liberal democracy is fully realizable in Hong Kong. But the liberal voices speak as goads against authoritarianism and repression. What I value is the liberal spirit, if not liberalism as an ideology. It is the liberal spirit that watches over civil liberties and human rights. If Hong Kong has known little democracy, it has enjoyed freedom to a considerable measure, including the civil liberties that are known in a Western democracy, especially freedom of thought, speech, the press, religion, and assembly.

Other treasure chests have also been deposited on the shores of Hong Kong, but I have listed the above four to deal with an important subject, namely, human rights and social responsibility, taking Hong Kong to be a strategic place to approach it.

Human rights is an urgent issue in China, but it cannot be dealt with directly within the present political climate there. It can be more easily taken up in Hong Kong. I would like to see an interdisciplinary approach to the subject. Instead of being discursive, let me share with you a vision, strung together by several metaphorical representations.

### *B. Toward Human Rights and Social Responsibility*

I envision for the first year of the twenty-first century a public forum or conference to be held in Hong Kong on the theme "Human Rights and Social

Responsibility: The Implementation of International Covenants on Rights in the Law Structure of the Special Administrative Region, Hong Kong." The participants would be interdisciplinary, and they would come from Hong Kong, Taiwan, mainland China, and some Western countries. Here are the metaphors that would set the agenda.

(1) *Article 39, The Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China:*

The provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and international labour conventions as applied to Hong Kong shall remain in force and shall be implemented through the laws of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

When and how are the contents of this article to be implemented?

(2) *Lee Kwan Yew's view that human rights laws are based on Western ideas and are unsuited for the developing countries of Asia, the People's Republic of China concurring. Responses to this view on the basis of Confucian teachings on humaneness (ren) and reciprocity (shu).* Participants will consist of New Confucians from Taiwan, Hong Kong, mainland China, Singapore, and the United States.

(3) *Equality of the sexes and a revised complementarity Yin-Yang ethics.* Participants will include female and male theologians and ethicists from the Chinese world and elsewhere, and scholars of Chinese philosophy and social studies.

(4) *The Biblical Covenant Idea.* Let this be correlated with Confucian *xin* (trust) and *shu* (reciprocity).

(5) *Matthew 25.* Doing something or doing nothing to the least of these—that is also doing or not doing something for Christ. This is the crux of the matter.

This kind of interaction in a forum (either in a conference or in writing), if successful, is what Jürgen Habermas would call "communications competence," and if it leads to action, it would be "communicative action." David Tracy would thoroughly approve of this kind of public discussion across religious lines using root metaphors.

### *C. A Christian Declaration on Human Rights and Social Responsibility*

I would like to assemble the ablest Chinese theologians knowledgeable in social ethics to draft such a declaration; it should be definitive, otherwise others would not listen. I have a copy of just this kind of declaration; it is called "A Definitive Study Paper: A Christian Declaration on Human

Rights," and it was drafted by the German theologian Jürgen Moltmann.<sup>13</sup> It was read and discussed in a conference on human rights convened by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in 1977.<sup>14</sup>

## VI. SPACE—IN THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND IN HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS

Pollution of the natural environment is a serious matter in all the places of the Chinese connection. It would take stupendous government efforts to deal with it. Of course raising people's consciousness for ecological protection is essential, but one despairs of the helplessness of individuals, even a group of individuals, in face of the massiveness of the problem. Besides governmental actions, concerned persons will just have to do what they can.

About ten years ago, I led a group of Christian scholars to meet Buddhists in China. We had the occasion to talk about the ecological crisis all over the world. The Buddhist friends said that Buddhists have a long tradition of work in environmental protection even as Buddhists are daily engaged in meditation to purify their minds. We talked about how the several religious groups can work together concretely along the line of environmental protection. The leader said, "We have the People's Political Consultative Committee for this area, and certainly the representatives for the several religions can cooperate on protecting the environment. We are already motivated in our consciousness. Don't let the word 'political' trip you; 'political consultation' just means public consultation."

This experience gives me a model by which to present the topic of this section, space—in the natural environment and in human consciousness. Again, I shall present the agenda for an imagined public consultation across religious lines, by use of metaphorical representations.

### *A. Taoism, Nature, and Space*

Taoism is noted for its theme of communion with nature. If communion, then consciousness; if consciousness, then space, inner space. Space is outer too, in nature certainly. Taoism makes nature and space connect, inwardly as well as outwardly.

<sup>13</sup>In *A Christian Declaration on Human Rights*, ed. Allen O. Miller (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977).

<sup>14</sup>Just after writing this paragraph, I received news that the China-backed Chief Executive Elect for the Special Administrative Region declared his support for China's intention to restrict freedom of assembly and dismantle a Bill of Rights that was passed by the Hong Kong Legislative Council in 1993. This news reveals that it will not be as easy to organize the forum as I envisaged.



I could show you Chinese painting after Chinese painting (Taoist influence on Chinese painting, especially what is called "mountain-water painting," is evident) in which an individual, a tiny figure, is in harmonious communion with nature in its vast space. You look at the painting not merely as a flat plane; you see a depth dimension, into which your consciousness is drawn. So in the picture, the tiny figure is in communion with nature, with its visible forms: mountain, water, trees, the firmament; there is wide space in nature, only suggested by a thin mist over the horizon, which is inner space as well. You, looking at the picture, not only see the exquisitely painted objects but also perceive the lyrical spaciousness of the whole scene.

I will next read several famous images from Lao-tzu's *Tao-Te-Ching*:

Thirty spokes converge upon a single hub;  
It is on the hole in the center that the use of the cart hinges.

We make a vessel from a lump of clay;  
It is the empty space within the vessel that makes it useful.

We make doors and windows for a room;  
But it is these empty spaces that make the room liveable.<sup>15</sup>

#### B. Buddhism on Nature and Emptiness

Buddhism's doctrine of "conditioned coproduction" teaches that everything is coconditioned and interconnected. Everything in nature—all living creatures, human beings in successive existences—all form a continuum. Let me read a part of a poem that has obvious ethical implications:

May creatures all around  
in weal and peace; may all  
be blessed with peace always;  
all creatures weak or strong,  
all creatures great and small;  
creatures afar or near,  
born or awaiting birth,  
—may all be blessed with peace!<sup>16</sup>

The other side of the coin of conditioned coproduction is that there is no

<sup>15</sup>*Tao Teh Ching*, trans. John C. H. Wu (New York: St. John's University Press, 1961), chap. 11.

<sup>16</sup>From the "Sutta-Nipata," in *The Teachings of the Compassionate Buddha*, ed. E. A. Burtt (New York: New American Library of World Literature, 1995), 46–47.

unconditioned self-existence. This is expressed by the concept of Emptiness or the Void. Nothing exists by itself. Another way to say that is, all reality is Emptiness. That concept is not easy for the Western mind, accustomed to the language of being, to grasp.

Instead of expanding further on Emptiness, I shall invoke a Zen koan. The koan goes something like this: Keichu, the first wheel maker of China, made two wheels with fifty spokes each. Now, suppose you removed the nave uniting the spokes; what would become of the wheel? Had Keichu done this, could he have been the master wheel maker?<sup>17</sup>

In a class on Chinese wisdom I taught here last semester, I related this koan to the students. They immediately recognized the similarity of this parable and Lao-tzu's metaphor of the spokes and the hub I cited before. Very smart. Indeed, Zen Buddhism is an offspring of the marriage of Buddhism and Taoism. I told the students that they would not have the time to work on the koan. Then I sneaked in a couple of lines from a commentary:

When the hubless wheel turns,  
Master or no master can stop it.<sup>18</sup>

Cavalierly I said, "Well, this just shows the Zen Buddhist's love of paradox: hubless hub, centerless center, gateless gate."

Then one alert student raised his hand and said, "Wait; it says here, the hubless wheel, not the hubless hub." I replied, "Really? That is really enigmatic; how can it be, a hubless wheel?" In a flash I realized that the Zen Buddhist hubless wheel is meant to go beyond Lao-tzu's space in the hub. You see, Lao-tzu still thinks in terms of the hub as an isolated object, though what he is talking about is the space of the hub. In other words, Buddhist Void or Emptiness is more radical than Taoist space. Is Buddhist Emptiness nihilism? Not necessarily. The lines I just quoted about the hubless wheel that turns are followed by the lines:

It turns above heaven and below earth,  
South, north, east and west.

If you get the meaning, you have enlightenment.

Existence is Emptiness, Emptiness is Existence. Stillness is Motion, Motion is Stillness. *Samsara* is *Sunyata*, *Sunyata* is *Samsara*: That is the centerpiece metaphor of the famous Buddhist text, *The Heart Sutra*.

<sup>17</sup>Quoted in Paul Refs, comp., *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 96.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

C. *The Self-Emptying Christ*

Although Buddhist Emptiness is radical, the self-emptying of Christ is even more radical (Phil. 2:6-11):

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,  
 who, though he was in the form of God,  
     did not regard equality with God  
     as something to be exploited,  
 but emptied himself,  
     taking the form of a slave,  
     being born in human likeness.  
 And being found in human form,  
     he humbled himself  
     and became obedient to the point of death—  
     even death on a cross.

(vv. 5-8)

To the point of death, even death on a cross—that is as ultimate as you can get. Death is terminal; death on the cross, a terrible death. Whose terrible death?

None other than the Son of God, who dies in order that humans may live forever.

Therefore God also highly exalted him  
 and gave him the name  
 that is above every name. . . .

(v. 9)

The cross is terrible, Yes! Yet,

. . . at the name of Jesus  
     every knee should bend,  
     in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
 and every tongue should confess  
     that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
     to the glory of God the Father.

(vv. 10-11)

In Emptiness is Fullness. In *Kenōsis* is *Plērōma*. Here the Emptiness is Self-emptying Love, and Fullness is Life full of Love, love from God and love for fellow beings. My conservative friends worry that because I putter around

with Buddhism and Taoism I tamper with Christianity. They do not realize that I am Christocentric through and through.

All that need not be misty mysticism or abstract metaphysics; it can be humanism at its best. To stay with Paul's Letter to the Philippians, "Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, . . . whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things" (4:8). Fullness of life, beauty in everything, praised and lived, lyrically. And that includes love of nature.

## VII. CONCLUSION

Will the wilderness blossom abundantly? That is a rhetorical question, and the answer is of course "Yes," but not a one-track Yes.

"The wilderness (or the dry land or the desert) blossoms" (Isa. 35:1-2) is a metaphor in a double sense. First, the wilderness is not a geographical place but a state of mind. In Isaiah 35 those who had the wilderness state of mind were the people of Judah and Israel, who were exiled from their homeland or estranged from their covenantal relationship with Yahweh, their Lord God. The previous chapters of Isaiah grippingly relate how the people got themselves into such a miserable mess.

Second, the wilderness ordinarily does not blossom but undergoes a transfiguration in order to blossom. It is the power of God that makes that happen, and once transfiguration takes place, extraordinary things happen. Hence the exuberant language "the glory of Lebanon," "the majesty of Carmel," and "the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God" (Isa. 35:2). In human terms, the weak hands will be strengthened, the feeble knees will be made firm, the lame shall leap, and the speechless shall sing (Isa. 35:3, 6). Again, wonderful metaphors pour forth:

. . . waters shall break forth in the wilderness,  
and streams in the desert;  
the burning sand shall become a pool,  
and the thirsty ground springs of water.

(Isa. 35:6-7)

I have made an attempt to translate such biblical-metaphorical language into the Chinese people's cultural world. I hope you have some idea why the Chinese, whether in Hong Kong, the mainland, or Taiwan, find themselves in a wilderness state, or why they are exiled or alienated from their splendid cultural heritage. Hence the present barrenness and aridity of their spiritual and cultural experience. Moving from the biblical world to the Chinese



people's experience and back requires a kind of hermeneutical transposition; and if properly done, it is valid hermeneutical exposition.

The burden of this lecture has been to show *how* the transfiguration from wilderness to blossoming can take place with respect to the Chinese people's world. I have demonstrated a methodological approach. I have made use of significant metaphors in the Bible and root metaphors in the relevant traditions. Further, I would like to propose more metaphors for public discourse. I have worked through this methodology not merely as an academic exercise but in participation, actual or imaginary, in dialogical discourse, for the sake of recovering or rediscovering spiritual-cultural treasures buried in the land I know well.

I do not conclude with the exuberance with which the text of Isaiah 35 ends. The Isaiah passage is after all an apocalyptic vision with a prophetic note. I hope I can suggest a prophetic note too, yet I am not the great prophet that Isaiah was. Nevertheless I end on an upbeat note. If the upbeat note is a small matter, I like to imagine an orchestra performing the music, not just one person playing or singing solo, and the music is on a large theme, no less than the future of a civilization as seen through an intricate maze, in the light of the one who is the Light of the world.

I think I have stepped on treasures hidden in the field. I am willing to ask others who are around to join me in selling everything in order to buy the field where the treasures are. The treasures are not all opened, but that time will surely come.

# Reflections on Human Cloning

by NANCY J. DUFF

*Nancy J. Duff, Associate Professor of Theological Ethics at Princeton Theological Seminary, is presently spending her sabbatical at the Center of Theological Inquiry. She gave the following presentation to the National Bioethics Advisory Commission at the Watergate Hotel in Washington, D.C. on March 13, 1997.*

**I**N THE sixteenth century, the Reformed theologian John Calvin wrote this about childbirth:

Although it is by the operation of natural causes that infants come into the world . . . yet therein the wonderful providence of God brightly shines forth. This miracle, it is true, because of its ordinary occurrence, is made less account of by us. But if ingratitude did not put upon our eyes the veil of stupidity, we would be ravished with admiration at every childbirth in the world.<sup>1</sup>

Four centuries later, we find that infants do not always come into the world through "the operation of natural causes." The miracle of childbirth has already moved beyond "ordinary meaning" through such procedures as in vitro fertilization. Now that we face the possibility of human life springing not from a fertilized egg but from a clone, we are making great account (some would say too much account) of this possible new way for infants to come into the world. Many people wonder whether this is indeed a miracle for which we can thank God or an ominous new way to play God ourselves. At the very least, it represents the ongoing tension between faith and science.

On the one hand, the church has sometimes taken an overly antagonistic opposition to scientific advances, so that Galileo was charged with heresy for supporting the seemingly unbiblical Copernican notion that the earth revolves around the sun. Darwin's theory of evolution (which apparently even frightened him a bit) is still opposed by some Christians who want equal time given to "creationism."<sup>2</sup> Such examples remind us that the church must not assume that faith requires protection by being shrouded in ignorance. We should be able to celebrate human accomplishments, including accomplishments in genetic research, as the result of divinely bestowed gifts of knowledge and technical skill.

<sup>1</sup> *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, trans. James Anderson (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), 1:369 (on Ps. 22:9).

<sup>2</sup> For theological essays critical of the creationist position, see Roland Mushat Frye, ed., *Is God a Creationist? The Religious Case Against Creation-Science* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1983).

On the other hand, the church rightly understands that sin can lead us to use scientific advances for extremely evil purposes. We can never support the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake apart from asking serious moral questions about the implications of that which we seek to know. To date, we have not been able to keep up with the moral and legal implications of adoption, much less of the dilemmas presented by artificial means of reproduction.<sup>3</sup> We certainly are not yet morally, legally, or spiritually prepared to tend to the difficult issues that would arise if human cloning became a reality.<sup>4</sup>

*My position, which I commend for your consideration, is as follows: While I do not rule out the morality of research into human cloning, I do support a moratorium on such research, which would be removed in light of strong evidence for the positive benefits of such research and after concrete proposals have been formulated for avoiding the potential risks. Whether such a moratorium is imposed or not, I think we should be morally, legally, and spiritually prepared for that time when human cloning (legal or illegal) may become a reality in this country or abroad.*

I offer nine guidelines with supporting theological rationale for the Commission to consider regarding research into human cloning.

(1) *We should proceed with research into human cloning only if compelling arguments can be made for its potential benefits.* While I do not believe that Christian ethics can proceed on utilitarian grounds (seeking to do the greatest good for the greatest number and maintaining that the ends justify the means), I do agree with Dietrich Bonhoeffer that Christians are called to find the "significant in the factual," which means that we can neither make moral judgments apart from knowing the scientific facts (including an assessment of the potential benefits and threats of human cloning) nor allow scientific facts to be the sole determination in making moral judgments.

While the medical benefits of animal cloning and other forms of genetic research on human beings are readily discussed in the material I have read, I have not yet found equally compelling accounts of the potential benefits of

<sup>3</sup> For instance, the status of frozen embryos has led to controversy between divorcing couples. Should these disputes be considered custody battles or disputes over property or matters of contractual rights? Should one invoke the same arguments used in the debate over abortion, or is this a separate issue? For information regarding some of the legal battles and arguments, see "Case Studies," in *The Ethics of Reproductive Technology*, ed. Kenneth D. Alpern (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 315-45.

<sup>4</sup> One panelist, otherwise in favor of research into human cloning, was nevertheless opposed to an individual's cloning himself or herself and then claiming to be the parent of the resulting child. Genetically, he pointed out, the child would not be the individual's son or daughter but his or her identical twin. This observation reveals just how complicated the social and legal issues of guardianship and familial relationships would become in the wake of human cloning.

human cloning itself.<sup>5</sup> So far, the proposed benefits of human cloning are inadequate. For example:

An infertile couple's desire to have a child through cloning does not provide an adequate reason to do so. There are already existing means of artificial reproduction. Furthermore, we must guard against the notion that reproducing (or in this case replicating) children, no matter what the reason or cost, constitutes a civil right. We should be sympathetic with and even appreciative of the infertile couple's desire to have a biologically linked child, for, among other things, it demonstrates an appreciation for children not always evident in contemporary society. Nevertheless, we need to examine whether the biological and genetic link between parent and child is so important that addressing infertility should take priority over other pressing medical concerns. (Furthermore, our society and the international community as a whole need to make the obstacles to adoption less formidable.)<sup>6</sup>

A grieving parent's wish to replicate a dying child does not justify research into human cloning. In fact, it misunderstands the distinctiveness of each human being called into being by God. We need to question any motivation to replicate a human being in order to replace another. It has taken a long time for us to recognize the inappropriateness of suggesting to a couple who has lost a child through miscarriage or infant death that they "can always have another." Even though a cloned child would indeed be a distinctive individual, his or her physical resemblance to the previous child, now dead, could cause emotional confusion on the part of the parents and the child.

Of course, any suggestion that children should be cloned for directly instrumental purposes, such as organ harvesting or providing the military with more soldiers or a basketball team with more talented players, should be rejected out of hand.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> There is, of course, no consensus regarding the benefits of animal cloning. While some religious groups and some advocates for animal welfare oppose animal cloning, I believe that the potential benefit merits continued research. I do, however, believe that we must ensure responsible treatment of the animals involved in such research. (See guideline 9 below.)

<sup>6</sup> My husband and I are among those who initiated international adoption proceedings only to find that while we could afford to raise a third child, we could not afford to make our way through the adoption proceedings (\$15,000 to \$20,000). Since there are so many couples (infertile or not) who would like to adopt, and since there are so many thousands of children needing adoptive parents, surely it serves the better part of wisdom to give our attention to making adoption a more viable option. This issue must be taken into consideration when exploring any topic (such as human cloning) that touches on infertility and artificial means of reproduction.

<sup>7</sup> I do, however, agree with the panelist who claimed that the couple who reversed a vasectomy in order to conceive a child potentially able to provide their other child with a bone marrow transplant acted responsibly and lovingly. Every indication was that they



I do not dismiss the possibility that significant benefits from research into human cloning exist, but I have not yet heard what they are. If it could be shown that research into human cloning would contribute to the well-being of the children and adults who already (or may someday) suffer from tragic genetic disorders (such as Down's syndrome or Huntington's disease) and that human cloning itself would benefit the children who are brought into the world through cloning, I could more readily support research (and government funding for research) into human cloning. The genetic disorders addressed by this research, however, would have to represent graver conditions than infertility.

(2) *Make a clear distinction between human cloning and genetic research in general.* There is a legitimate fear among some scientists and ethicists that any ban or moratorium on research into human cloning would also prohibit other promising (and perhaps less morally complicated) forms of human genetic research.

Some people who oppose human cloning invoke the "slippery-slope" argument to oppose all genetic research that could lead us closer to making human cloning possible. I believe that this argument should be invoked to force us to look honestly and courageously at the possible negative consequences of our position or action, but that it does not necessarily dictate abandoning the original position or action. Employing it may simply instruct us on how to identify the moral boundary that we do not want to cross. I would, therefore, support morally responsible research that promises to advance our understanding of human biology and disease, even if such research made the path to human cloning easier. This is part of what is entailed in discerning "the significant in the factual."

(3) *Guard against self-deception (and, of course, public deception) when presenting the pros and cons of human cloning.* If we are genuinely searching to uncover the truth (Christians would say "to discern God's will") about a controversial issue, we must recognize that truth itself destroys avenues for self-deception.<sup>8</sup> Debate over abortion provides an excellent and tragic example of our inability to avoid self-deception in search of the truth. The debate over abortion (most recently focused on what are called either "late-term" or "partial-birth"

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would be loving parents to this new child whether a compatible bone marrow was provided or not. We could not, however, sanction the cloning of children for organ harvesting who would subsequently be abandoned or destroyed.

<sup>8</sup> See Stanley Hauerwas, "Self-Deception and Autobiography: Reflections on Speer's *Inside the Third Reich*," in *Truthfulness and Tragedy: Further Investigations in Christian Ethics*, by Stanley Hauerwas with Richard Bondi and David B. Burrell (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), 82-100.

abortions, depending on your position) reveals a reluctance to look at the facts surrounding both sides of a serious issue out of fear that one might discover or publicize a fact that does not support one's stance. Representatives from pro-life and pro-choice groups are equally guilty in this regard, rarely able to state each other's positions fairly, and hiding facts (sometimes from themselves as well as others) that do not support their position, while exaggerating facts that do.<sup>9</sup> We must avoid repeating this error in the debate over human cloning. The public needs to hear, in language that nonscientists can understand, the potential scientific, moral, legal, and social benefits, as well as the potential threats, posed by human cloning.

(4) *Research all related topics.* We need to continue to gather as much information as possible to anticipate policy decisions for that day when human cloning may occur whether banned or not. For instance, would the study of twins (the closest example to the genetic relationship between a subject and its clone) enable us to understand better the positive and negative emotional and social aspects of being a clone?<sup>10</sup> Similarly, we could study the impact of artificial insemination with an anonymous donor on the child conceived in this way. Does the child have a longing to know something about the anonymous sperm donor (as biological father?) that poses a serious threat to that child's well-being, or does the child adjust well to the social parent or parents apart from that knowledge? A child conceived from artificial insemination by donor does not face the same situation as would a child having no biological and genetic father at all, but perhaps there are important similarities that could be uncovered through research. Numerous questions and dilemmas raised by adoption, artificial insemination, and in vitro fertilization require more research that could potentially prevent even more serious dilemmas resulting from human cloning.

(5) *We must consider the status of the human embryo in research.* Given the divisiveness of this question in relation to the abortion debate, this is the hardest issue that must be considered, and one that cannot be fully resolved. Nevertheless, the doctrine of vocation claims that God calls each of us into the world for a purpose. Each life has divinely bestowed value and purpose, so like Mordecai addressing Esther, we can say to each other, "Who knows whether it was for such a time as this that you were brought into the kingdom?" (Esth. 4:14) Although we may never agree on the point at which a

<sup>9</sup> I am interested in promoting the idea of common ground between pro-life and pro-choice groups. Before we reach irreconcilable differences regarding what should be legal, our energies would be more productively spent on the common goal of reducing the number of unwanted pregnancies rather than fighting each other.

<sup>10</sup> Of course, if human cloning were used only to replicate embryos to assist existing means of artificial reproduction, the concern stated here would not necessarily apply.

developing life becomes a human person, we are compelled to take nascent life seriously and to ask when it is no longer morally acceptable to experiment on or discard human embryos.<sup>11</sup>

(6) *If we proceed with research into human cloning, we must be mindful of those who are most likely to be exploited, and we must ensure the civil rights of those people who come into the world through cloning.* Given the history of medical experimentation and the lack of access to medical resources for certain groups of people, we must be especially concerned that women, racial and ethnic minorities, prisoners, and the poor are not exploited as a result of this research or of human cloning itself. Do we desire to clone human beings in order to enhance or eliminate certain racial features, or to replicate one sex in greater numbers than the other? Will one group, such as prisoners or the poor, be exploited in the process of experimentation?

Furthermore, theological affirmations regarding the divinely appointed vocation of each individual coincide with concern for the civil and human rights of each person born into the world, no matter how conceived. Hence, no person could ever be cloned to serve a predetermined purpose in the world. We cannot, for instance, clone human beings to provide soldiers for the military or with the expectation that they will be great athletes or in an attempt to create a great musician or scientist. God alone calls a person into being, no matter how that person was conceived, reproduced, or replicated. No matter how well we learn to manipulate genetic matter or replicate human life, we do not create life the way God does. In the story of creation recorded in the Hebrew Bible, the word for "create" is used only with God as subject. The theological claim that only God can create human life is no less true if we learn to clone human beings than it is now. We do not create the human soul. We do not, as God does, call human beings into existence. Nor do we, as God does, call human beings into different identities and tasks.

Again, if we are someday able through human cloning to eliminate genetic disorders from future individuals, we must ensure that those who remain with disabilities will not be discriminated against. For instance, a woman carrying a fetus that will develop abnormalities should not be forced to abort that fetus directly or indirectly (e.g., by refusal to grant insurance coverage if the fetus is brought to term). While the ability to correct devastating disabilities and diseases is an admirable goal, we can never as a society find excuses for neglecting or otherwise discriminating against persons with disabilities.

<sup>11</sup> It took 277 attempts to produce Dolly, the first genetically cloned mammal. If this had been an attempt to clone a human being, would there have been 276 losses of cells and DNA material or 276 lost human lives? Although for some this may be too extreme a way to pose the question, we cannot avoid honestly asking about the value or moral status of the human embryo.

(7) *We can proceed with research into human cloning only after considering larger issues of allocation.* From a Christian perspective, we are concerned about the welfare of the least of the brothers and sisters around us. "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these, so you did it to me" (Matt. 25:40). While many of us can thank God that our children are not likely to die from flu, diphtheria, or polio, or even suffer the mumps, measles, or rubella because of advances in medicine, we must be mindful of the enormous number of children and adults in this country and abroad who are forced to live as if these advances were never made. Simple diarrhea kills thousands of children a year.

When considering research into human cloning, we must look to the responsible use of limited resources. Though I am not a utilitarian, I believe that it is mandatory to ask whether other projects would serve the well-being of a greater number of people than research into human cloning. Government spending should be targeted for research that will best further the common good by addressing the most serious questions of health and disability. If we are going to spend millions of dollars, let it be to promote the well-being of the least of the brothers and sisters among us (and, hence, the well-being of us all, for our destiny is tied to theirs).

(8) *Consider first the best interest of children.* Although this guideline comes eighth in my list, I give it top priority. From a Christian perspective, we can affirm that all children truly belong only to God. They are not ours to manipulate, control, or abuse. But even apart from religious convictions, there are good reasons (both compassionate and practical) for society to put the best interest of children first. Unfortunately, no matter how a child comes into the world, through the operation of natural causes, through in vitro fertilization, or eventually through cloning, we have not been and, no doubt, will not be "ravished with admiration at every childbirth in the world."

Recent court cases indicate that we are already confused about the best interest of children. We find it difficult to sever ties between abusive parents and their children in order to give custody to loving, nonabusive foster parents who want to adopt. We can undervalue the biological and genetic ties between a so-called surrogate mother and the child to whom she gives birth, while granting custody of a toddler to a biological father he never knew. We have often protected contractual agreements or the rights of biological parents with far more zeal than we have pursued the best interest of children. Here, we have yet another opportunity to put the best interest of children forward when considering allocation and research into human cloning. At the very least, we must ensure the civil rights of children who may someday come into the world through cloning, by insisting that no child can be owned, bought, sold, or manipulated, that no government agency or group can



sponsor the cloning of a child over which it will have guardianship (i.e., children will be cloned only in circumstances where they will be reared by a family), and that no child can be cloned solely for the purpose of procuring organs or for monetary gain.

I do not agree with those theologians who fear that human cloning would diminish the value of intimate relationships between husbands and wives or add one more obstacle to the formation of "traditional" two-parent families. Sexual intercourse will always have both procreative and unitive value for most couples. It is not, however, unreasonable to place value in the unitive function alone when procreation is not possible or desirable. Furthermore, while an intact family composed of two parents of the opposite sex and their biological child or children may provide the best standard family unit in society (and should, therefore, be given support), we would be naive and cruel to dismiss the possibility that differently configured families (e.g., families with single parents or homosexual parents or adopted children) may produce family situations that are as good as, or, in some cases, better than, those of families that fit the standard. While we need to avoid the cruelty to children that arises when society assumes that their resilience allows them to flourish in any family unit however configured, we also need to avoid the cruelty of rejecting outright or devaluing all families that do not fit the norm. While there are serious reasons to have reservations about research into human cloning, the idea that it would undermine the relationship between men and women or the basic family unit is not morally or theologically convincing.

(9) *Regulate the treatment of animals involved in cloning research.* Since the cloning of Dolly the sheep, the primary focus on moral issues regarding cloning has been on research into human cloning. Although one can clearly mark the distinction between research into the cloning of animals and research into the cloning of human beings, there are inseparable ties between them. Research into animal cloning adds to our knowledge of human cloning. There is a continuum from one kind of research to the next (which is why people became even more nervous when they heard that monkeys had been cloned, since monkeys are presumably closer to humans than are sheep). Furthermore, the benefits of animal cloning are for the most part meant to serve human beings. The biblical understanding of having dominion over the earth is not rightly interpreted to mean that human beings are free to abuse animals. Rather, we are called into responsibility for them. If it is not the responsibility of the National Bioethics Advisory Commission to look into the welfare of animals in cloning research, I urge you to direct that responsibility to the appropriate commission or committee.

These nine guidelines represent the reflections of one theological ethicist.

Obviously, the panel presentations demonstrated that there are very able and thoughtful theological and philosophical ethicists who disagree with me. The Commission, of course, must make a recommendation to the President on behalf of a pluralistic society whose members do not always share common beliefs and values.

How would I wish for you to proceed in light of this diversity of opinion? I propose that a common denominator for making your recommendation center around the question of whether research into human cloning will serve the common good. This suggestion is complicated not only by the lack of agreement in this country and abroad on what the common good is but also by our lack of commitment to serving the common good (however it may be defined).

My theological convictions make me want to put the best interest of "the least of the brothers and sisters" at the center of our concern for the common good. We need to discern the indissoluble link that connects the most privileged with the most vulnerable persons and groups in our human community. In making a decision regarding research into human cloning, we must pay close attention to the benefits it would provide for those who suffer the worst genetic disorders; we must look closely at the possibility of some groups or individuals being exploited or neglected through human cloning; and we must keep before us the welfare of the children who would enter the world through cloning. To counter our tendency to put the autonomy of the individual in conflict with the well-being of the community, I affirm the claim that "in each is the good of all, and in all is the good of each."<sup>12</sup> We cannot serve the common good apart from looking after the welfare of the individual, and the individual's well-being is tied inseparably to that of the community.

There are good secular reasons for being guided by a concern for the common good and for those who have the most to lose if we make the wrong decision. On the more practical and self-serving side, we need to recognize that we will pay for our neglect of the those who are the most vulnerable. Our well-being is indeed tied to their well-being. But there are also altruistic reasons (which some people from differing theological and secular traditions share) for promoting concern for the common good and focusing on the welfare of the most vulnerable. If research into human cloning does move forward, we must ensure that it does not seek knowledge for its own sake, or only to promote monetary gain or individual fame, but to serve and protect the common good.

<sup>12</sup> I heard this aphorism from Paul Lehmann. I do not know if he coined or was quoting it.

# Wisdom in a Motto

by THOMAS W. GILLESPIE

*Thomas W. Gillespie, President and Professor of New Testament, Princeton Theological Seminary, preached this sermon at the Interreligious Service of Thanksgiving sponsored by the Princeton Chamber of Commerce on the occasion of Princeton University's 250th anniversary, Princeton University Chapel, September 21, 1996.*

Text: Proverbs 1:1-7

IN HIS DELIGHTFUL book *Maybe (Maybe Not)*, Robert Fulghum calls attention to the contradictory counsel that comes to us through proverbial wisdom. Consider these examples:

Look before you leap.

He who hesitates is lost.

Two heads are better than one.

If you want something done right, do it yourself.

Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

Better safe than sorry.

Out of sight, out of mind.

Absence makes the heart grow fonder.

You can't tell a book by its cover.

Clothes make the man.

Many hands make light work.

Too many cooks spoil the broth.

You can't teach an old dog new tricks.

It's never too late to learn.

Never sweat the small stuff.

God is in the details.<sup>1</sup>

Proverbs represent the condensed wisdom of human experience in epigrammatic form. If they are conflicting or contradictory or paradoxical or dialectical (whichever term you prefer), it is because human existence is itself conflicting, contradictory, paradoxical, and dialectical.

Yet, at least in the biblical wisdom tradition, proverbs assume that we live in

<sup>1</sup> *Maybe (Maybe Not): Second Thoughts from a Secret Life* (New York: Villard, 1993), 21-22.

an ordered universe that ultimately makes sense of our intellectual and moral experience. According to R. B. Y. Scott, the way of wisdom in Israel "was a striving for a structure of order, meaning, and value through cultivation of the mind and conscience."<sup>2</sup> "Inherent in the idea of wisdom was that it could be taught," he adds, "whether as a technical craft, as rules for the good life, or as a profound understanding of the meaning of human existence."<sup>3</sup>

It is in this sense that Carole R. Fontaine calls the introductory verses of the canonical Proverbs "the teaching goals of the ancient sages." Listen to them once more in terms of educational objectives:

For learning about wisdom and instruction,  
 for understanding words of insight,  
 for gaining instruction in wise dealing,  
 righteousness, justice, and equity;  
 to teach shrewdness to the simple,  
 knowledge and prudence to the young—  
 Let the wise also hear and gain in learning,  
 and the discerning acquire skill,  
 to understand a proverb and a figure,  
 the words of the wise and their riddles.

(1:2-6)

"The curriculum of wisdom teaching is well presented here," Fontaine continues, "with the piling up of many synonyms, all of which revolve around the rather optimistic view that education *does* make a difference in the way people live their lives."<sup>4</sup>

Teaching goals? Curriculum? Human transformation through education? Sounds familiar, doesn't it? Yogi Berra might call this "déjà vu all over again," while others would prefer the proverb "What goes around comes around."

The connection between the ancient wisdom tradition and modern education is not all that farfetched. For, as Michael V. Fox points out, the Hebrew word *hokma* has a broader semantic range than does the English term "wisdom," its ordinary translation equivalent. *Hokma* embraces "the craftsman's skill, the magician's arts, the statesman's savvy, the merchant's know-

<sup>2</sup> *The Way of Wisdom in the Old Testament* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), 22.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>4</sup> "Wisdom in Proverbs," in *In Search of Wisdom: Essays in Memory of John G. Gammie*, ed. Leo G. Perdue, Bernard Brandon Scott, and William Johnston Wiseman (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 107-8.



how, the sly person's wiles," as well as the scholar's intellect and amassed knowledge.<sup>5</sup>

Now, the development of the scholar's intellect and the amassing of knowledge are the business of the university. While president of Harvard, Nathan Pusey is alleged to have quipped, "The reason the University is such a vast reservoir of knowledge is that the freshmen bring so much in and the seniors take so little out." In truth, of course, a university is a reservoir of knowledge because of its two great resources (in addition to students)—its library and its faculty. More properly, one might say that the library collects and preserves knowledge while the faculty creates and transmits it.

The difference between ancient and modern times, of course, is that what counts as knowledge has changed. For the Hebrew sages *hokma* began with "the fear of the Lord" because knowledge was predicated upon God the Creator. Through wisdom came the insight that wisdom is inherent in the world because the world itself was created by God through a wisdom that transcends the world. This transcendental wisdom is eventually personalized in the tradition and becomes proactive in her relationship to humans. The book of Proverbs asks and answers the question:

Does not wisdom call,  
and does not understanding raise her voice?  
On the heights, beside the way,  
at the crossroads she takes her stand;  
beside the gates in front of the town,  
at the entrance of the portals  
she cries out.

(8:1-3)

Human knowledge, in other words, is an intellectual and moral response to the intelligible physical and moral world in which we live. Intuitive? Yes. Creative? Yes. Imaginative? Yes. But still an intuitive, creative, imaginative *response* to the Wisdom that seeks us out.

That same vision informed the medieval and post-Reformation universities in western Europe, which owed their existence to the Catholic and Protestant churches. Early American colleges were founded on similar assumptions, as the mottos on their respective seals attest. Princeton's is typical: *Dei sub numine viget* (Under God's Power She Flourishes).

But the intellectual world changed, as it constantly does. First came the

<sup>5</sup> "Wisdom in Qoheleth," in *In Search of Wisdom*, ed. Perdue, Scott, and Wiseman, 116.

Enlightenment of the eighteenth century with its confidence in a universal reason that was alleged to be constant for all people at all times in all places without regard to gender, race, or social location. Then came the era of the emerging empirical sciences, and these two intellectual movements in combination gave rise to the modern university, which emerged initially in Germany and spread eventually throughout Europe and the United States. What counted now as knowledge—in contradistinction to opinion or belief, not to mention superstition—were the demonstrable results of the so-called hard sciences.

The hegemony of the natural sciences has been so pervasive that such fields of inquiry as psychology and sociology have been compelled to define themselves as “social sciences” on the basis of at least a disciplined methodology. Perhaps the humanities have suffered the greatest loss of status in the modern university—with the exception of theology, once the queen of the sciences, which has been banished to the university divinity school or redefined and reassigned to religious-studies programs.

Nonetheless, the results of this movement in higher education have been nothing short of awesome. Under the aegis of the modern university, the human adventure of intellectual inquiry has been both breathtakingly exciting and unbelievably productive. I can think of no institution today that rivals the university in fundamental public respect.

Higher education has its critics, of course. Near the conclusion of his very positive book *The University: An Owner's Manual*, Henry Rosovsky comments:

That I have written a positive book about universities and higher education is most unusual. More commonly, recent critics have labeled us as mind-closers, cultural illiterates, and protectors of professional scams.

We are said to cultivate overspecialization and obscurantism, and the chorus of critics has come from all corners of our diverse society: some students, parents, and alumni; the press and politicians; and from within our own professional ranks.

Rosovsky's response to these criticisms is the story of an American, a Frenchman, and a Japanese who have been captured by a band of terrorists and face execution in the morning:

A traditional last request is offered to each prisoner. The Frenchman asks that an elegant supper be flown in from his favorite Paris restaurant. The Japanese wants one final opportunity to give a lecture in which he can explain the real secret of his country's successful management techniques.

The American asks to be shot *before* that lecture . . . the pain of one more sermon would be unbearable.<sup>6</sup>

In other words, the evident achievements of the university so far outweigh its shortcomings that the issue of its value to the world is not conceivably in doubt.

At the risk of inflicting the pain of that one more unbearable sermon, however, I need to say that it is unwise to ignore cracks in the dike. Higher education is going through a time of introspection and reflection, and the most serious issue coming into focus concerns what counts as knowledge. If these critics are correct in their assessment of our modern intellectual culture, we may be facing an epistemological paradigm shift as revolutionary as the Enlightenment itself.

The challenge to the academic status quo goes by the name of *postmodernism*. Ernest Gellner has defined it this way: "Postmodernism is a contemporary movement. It is strong and fashionable. Over and above this, it is not altogether clear what the devil it is."<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps it is more a mood than a movement—a mood of discontent with the assumptions of modernism that have dominated Western culture since the Enlightenment and provided the foundations of knowledge as represented by universities. It is a mood that compels more and more people to exercise a "hermeneutics of suspicion" with regard to the modern claim of a universal reason. The human ability to think may be universal, but the exercise of our rational powers is conditioned, if not determined, by gender, race, and ethnicity, as well as by historical and social location.

What disappears from the screen under the convictions of this antifoundationalism is not only "truth with a big T and in the singular," as William James once put it, but the concept of truth itself. Postmodernism suspects all knowledge claims of being merely rationalizations of either desire (à la Sigmund Freud) or social privilege (à la Max Weber). Under these conditions, truth gives way to perspectives and opinions. If René Descartes lived today and claimed, "I think, therefore I am," a postmodernist would retort, "That's what you think."

Perhaps the point of postmodernism is epitomized in the modern proverb "Different strokes for different folks." Proverbs scholar Wolfgang Mieder calls "Different strokes for different folks" a "fascinating American proverb"

<sup>6</sup> Henry Rosovsky, *The University: An Owner's Manual* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1990), 295.

<sup>7</sup> *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion* (London: Routledge, 1992), 22.

that "expresses a major element of the American world view."<sup>8</sup> Alyce M. McKenzie calls this "America's Quintessential Postmodern Proverb" and tracks its use over the past four decades.<sup>9</sup> Her list includes the following examples: "Different hopes for different folks" was the caption beneath three high school students in widely different attire, making the point that "people want different things from a college education" (1974). Air Canada used the slogan "different slopes for different folks" to get people to fly to Canada for a skiing vacation (1980). Volkswagen employed "different Volks for different folks" to convey that they had other models besides the Beetle. The proverb appears as the headline of an advertisement for the Pointe Tennis and Golf Resort in Phoenix to convey that the resort, formerly limited to tennis, now includes a golf course.

Many other instances are cited, but you get the picture. McKenzie observes that in these cartoons, slogans, and ads, "one can hear the gradual development of a key cultural axiom," namely, that "having a variety of choices in consumer products, lifestyles, and values is paramount and that these choices are all equally valid because they boil down to individual preference."<sup>10</sup>

No matter how you or I may judge that assessment with regard to "consumer products, lifestyles, and values," the cultural axiom becomes problematic if it is applied to knowledge. Consider the claim that all knowledge represents "a variety of choices" and that "these choices are all equally valid because they boil down to individual preference." If that were to become "the cultural axiom" of the university, Harvard would be compelled to change its motto once again, this time from *Veritas* to *Sententia*, from "Truth" to "Opinion." As silly or as outrageous as this may sound in this setting, it is in fact the case that the vandals are already inside the gates of the university.

In a recent Op-Ed piece in *The New York Times* entitled "Science Set Free From Truth," *Scientific American* writer John Horgan notes: "Like a mutant virus, postmodernism has infected not only philosophy and the social sciences but even such alleged bastions of truth and objectivity as physics and chemistry." Horgan does not believe for a moment that this virus will do in the factuality of scientific claims regarding the existence of atoms and elements, DNA and bacteria, stars and galaxies, gravity and electromagnetism. But he does think that science has pushed the boundaries of knowledge to the point where confirmation of theories is impossible to attain.

<sup>8</sup> "Different Strokes for Different Folks," in *American Proverbs: A Study of Texts and Contexts*, ed. Wolfgang Mieder (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), 319.

<sup>9</sup> "Different Strokes for Different Folks: America's Quintessential Postmodern Proverb," *Theology Today* 53 (1996): 201-12.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.



Citing superstring theory in physics (sometimes called a “theory of everything”) and chaos theory arising out of chemistry, Horgan argues that some of the most prominent scientists in the world now “traffic in hypotheses that are remarkably postmodern in character.” Such theorizing he dubs “ironic science,” because it can be asserted and argued but not demonstrated and proven. Nonetheless, he concludes:

I do not mean to imply that ironic science has no value. Far from it. At its best, ironic science, like great literature or philosophy or yes, literary criticism, induces wonder. By addressing unanswerable questions and imagining realms beyond the reach of true science, ironic science helps insure that we remain forever awestruck before the mystery of the universe. But ironic science cannot give us the truth.<sup>11</sup>

Whatever the ultimate impact of postmodernism may be upon the intellectual culture of the university, it seems clear to me that knowledge will be redefined in terms of a new humility. Recognition will be given to the role of gender, race, and social location, at least in the humanities and social sciences. And perhaps the claim of the late Michael Polanyi, the chemist turned philosopher of science, will also be recognized.

Polanyi argued that all knowledge is personal in character, that it is constructed by the interplay between the objective and the subjective, and, most important, that it entails “belief” in the sense of undemonstrated and undemonstrable assumptions. Should something like this develop, perhaps even theology will be invited back to the academic conversation as a representative of knowledge rather than mere faith.

Meanwhile, ironic science has brought us back to the place where we stand with the ancient sages of Israel “awestruck before the mystery of the universe.” Perhaps in that posture we can entertain the possibility that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” Perhaps we can even perceive the wisdom of the trustees of Princeton University, who a century ago adopted the motto *Dei sub numine viget* (Under God’s Power She Flourishes).

That the University flourishes is empirically demonstrable and thus true. We are here to acknowledge and celebrate that wonderful fact. In our postmodern situation, I trust that you will also allow me to voice the opinion—no, the conviction—that Princeton University flourishes “under God’s Power.”

<sup>11</sup> *The New York Times*, Op-Ed section (Tuesday, July 16, 1996).

# My Dark Side

by CAROL LAKEY HESS

*Carol Lakey Hess, Assistant Professor of Christian Education at Princeton Theological Seminary, is the author of the forthcoming book Caretakers of Our Common House: Women's Development in Communities of Faith (Abingdon). She preached this opening communion sermon in Miller Chapel on January 27, 1997.*

Text: Romans 11:33-36

**M**Y DARK SIDE. I wonder what you were thinking when you first saw the title of this sermon.

Perhaps some of you were curious, musing: "Hey, this ought to be interesting, maybe even a little sensational. This may be one Hess talk that I'll stay awake for." Perhaps others of you were nervous, imagining the possible reverberations of such a sermon: "O my goodness, what moral turpitude is she going to reveal? I can see the headlines now. 'Princeton Seminary Professor Confesses Dark Secret; Walks on the Wild Side.'" "Oh, no," some of you homiletic types might be fearing, "not one of those subjective, solipsistic, wear-your-heart—or your id—on-your-shirtsleeve sermons." Those of you who are baby boomers may wonder if I'm borrowing from the recycled (and a little tired) *Star Wars* hype, whose new sequels, George Lucas promises, will be "a lot darker . . . because [they] are about a fall from grace . . . how a Jedi knight was corrupted by the dark side and became Darth Vader."

"Is this going to be a tell-all sermon?" I was asked. Did I detect anxiety when the title was made public? Now, the rumor is true, that *was* me down at the Camden County Jail being photographed and finger-printed a couple of weeks ago—for the second time in fifteen years. And the mug shot, if it didn't scare you away first, would make you think there's a dicey story there. But that's not what I'm going to talk about right now. That's not my dark side.

During my early teen years, I was heavily involved in the amateur theater that was housed in our junior high school. I absolutely loved it! I did props, costumes, lights, and a number of minor acting parts. The summer after my freshman year in high school, I had a part in the musical *No, No Nanette*. I was a member of the dancing chorus; I sang, I Charlestoned, and I think I even had a line or two. The music was easy enough for one who, like me, is an enthusiastic but "tune-ally" challenged singer, and the movement came easily. On the evening my mother and then four-year-old little sister, Amy, came to see the play, I was excited. I wasn't sure if my mom would like the musical (she could be picky about these things), but I thought she'd notice

that I made a pretty decent flapper. I spotted Mom and Amy right away; they were in the middle of the moderate sized theater. "All right!" I thought. "They have good seats. They will see me well." I pulled off what I thought was my best performance that night.

Now, it was the custom after the play for the cast to mingle with the audience in full costume. I immediately went looking for my family members. I noticed that my mom stood to the side with a confused look on her face. I walked up to her and said, "How did you like it?" She smiled the kind of standard, polite smile you'd give to a stranger. Then she stared at me, narrowed her eyes, and finally a look of recognition crossed her face. "Oh, that's who you were!" she exclaimed. "I never did pick you out during the play; I thought you weren't in it. Why didn't you tell me you were wearing a blond wig!"

At first, I was a little hurt. I had performed before the woman who bore me and raised me, and she didn't recognize me because I was a blond! True, I didn't have a lead part, but I was on stage a lot. She had ample opportunity to recognize some mannerism, some turn of the mouth, something that was familiarly Carol Lakey! For years, I remembered this incident as the time my mother didn't recognize her own daughter. (Our poor mothers; how often we dwell on their failings!)

Then, some years later, when I was reflecting on this event, an important realization dawned on me: Rather than being the night my mother didn't know me, this was the night she recognized and named most deeply who I was. My darkness was an essential part of me; in fact, it was central. If someone were to image me or describe me, no doubt that would be one of the first things that would come to mind. And it was a part of me that I loved. By covering over my darkness, by changing me into a blond, the director of the play had made me into someone else. Of course, that is the nature of acting. And sometimes, it is when we try on something else that we most fully know who we are. It was appropriate that my own mother could not pick me out that night; the "me" that I was and would further mature into was irrevocably dark.

This sermon, which is indeed about my dark side, is not about the side that Darth Vader walks on; it's about that other dark side: that side of me that is rich, complex, and deeply meaningful. Those of you who know me know that my celebration of my darkness is more than skin deep, that it is also the recovery of a legacy that must not die. My life is framed by my two Holocausts. My Jewish grandparents and two young uncles, the Schlossers, were murdered because their darkness was deemed subhuman by the Nazi

regime. In fact, the Nazis literally constructed a hair-color spectrum, with dark hair on the subhuman end and blond hair on the superhuman end. My Cherokee great-grandmother, Elizabeth Roper, was relocated because her darkness was considered dirty, impure, threatening. In fact, Europeanizing boarding schools, to which many native children were tragically sent, forced Cherokee and other native children to cut short their long, beautiful dark hair. My darkness is a symbol of what is good and essential in me, including two marvelous cultural legacies; and it is also a dangerous memory of the pain of my Jewish and Cherokee ancestors.

My dark side. Yes, my dark side is that side of me that is essential to who I am. It is the richness and the deepness, the wonder and the pain, of who I am. But this sermon is not really about my coloring or my heritage; it is about another aspect of my darkness, my faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ. This sermon is about the importance of recognizing the darkness, richness, deepness, and complexity of this gospel. In bringing to you my own associations with the image of darkness, I am asking you to think about darkness in a way different from how we traditionally think. I know that the metaphor of darkness is not all good; but then, neither is the metaphor of light. Just as darkness can mean we don't know where we are going, bright light can mean we are scorched and parched and dry. Today, we will think of the goodness of the dark: the marvelous shadow of God that protects and cools us; the dark, stormy presence of God that brings rain to our dryness; the deep color of a God who is glorious and mysterious. For, regardless of our skin color, this darkness is essential to the identity of all in this room.

Yes, darkness is a symbol for me of the gospel. The gospel, which is also an essential and good part of me, is deeply rich, fraught with dangerous memories of those who suffered and those who rebelled. It is irreducibly complex. The darkness of God's good news to this world is a darkness I claim, I celebrate, I remember in dangerous ways. On this first day of the semester in this first month of 1997, I want to open my dark side to you and invite you to explore the richness of your own dark side.

"O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!" exclaimed Paul in Romans 11. I suggest four important ways in which Paul's exclamation deepens our understanding of the gospel: Paul points us to the complexity of the gospel, the self-critical nature of the gospel, the invitation to lament in the gospel, and the hopefulness of the gospel. *Complexity, self-critique, lament, and hope* constitute the dark vitality of the gospel.

First, *complexity*. "How unsearchable are God's judgments and how inscrutable God's ways!" Paul goes on. The Bible itself and the long history of



Jewish and Christian commentary on the Bible comprise a thick and complex conversation. We are told about judgment and grace; a transcendent God and an immanent God; a God who gets angry at injustice and shows compassion to sinners; a Savior who is human and divine; a people that is sanctified but fallible; a people that sometimes needs humbling and other times needs empowering. Our God walked the dusty roads of this earth and yet allowed costly perfume to be poured on his dirty feet. Our God humbled himself before the lowly and yet raised up her daughters before the proud. Our God was tangible in Jesus and yet remains mysteriously evasive and unpredictable. Our God is holy and yet scandalously impious. It's hard sometimes to hold it all together, and so we thin out the tradition to make it manageable. We proclaim one side of the complexity and neglect the other side; we make our complex tradition fit into neat and clean categories. And then we have a pale lavender message instead of the deep purple of the gospel.

Cornel West has said, "I have great respect for theologians. They are trying to make the Christian faith coherent and consistent. Of course, I don't think the Christian faith *is* coherent and consistent, but that's another issue." Neither West nor I mean to "dis" (as my kids would say) theologians; some of my best friends and favorite colleagues are theologians, and I even fancy myself to be one of sorts. West is pointing to the truth of God that breaks the bounds of coherency and consistency. Any neat categories are too narrow. Niels Bohr, the Danish physicist and Nobel laureate, said, "The opposite of a correct statement is a false statement. The opposite of a profound truth may well be another profound truth." Such is the wisdom, complexity, depth, and richness of God. Although Karl Barth may be correct in summing up dogmatics and the gospel as "Jesus Loves Me, This I Know," he still felt the need to expound upon this just a tad! Yes, Paul deepens our understanding of the gospel by reminding us of the mystery and complexity of a God who presses us toward opposing profound truths.

Now, in speaking about the complexity of the gospel, I must recognize that I, and Christian history, have that other kind of dark side—that which we commonly associate with fallenness, sinfulness, wrongdoing. Several years ago, when I was coming to terms with my heritage of suffering, I came across an article by an African American man by the name of Otis Lakey, who was doing some historical work on slavery. I was stunned when I saw it. Lakey, yet another branch in my complicated family tree, is not all that common a name. My first thought was: Can it be; do I also have slave ancestors? Have there been three Holocausts in my history? Then I realized, as you no doubt have, that some Lakeys were probably slave owners, and that is probably how Otis

Lakey and his family got their name. Whether or not my particular ancestors were slave owners, I know that I am a complex combination of having been sinned against and having sinned against others. The jail warden told me to write on the papers I filled out at the Camden County Jail "one of the good ladies," so that, she explained, "we'll know exactly who you're part of." You see, I was updating my status as a volunteer. (If the people next to you fell asleep after my first mention of my time in jail, please wake them up now!) Still, I felt uncomfortable writing "good ladies" on my sheet. I know that I am *simil justus et peccator*. And, to be honest with you, it's not so easy for me to know "who" is part of "what." Who are the good sheep and who are the bad goats?

We inherit a legacy that is *simil justus et peccator*; our tradition has at best an ambiguous record with regard to women, slaves, Jews, gays and lesbians, and those folks we deem heretics. Regardless of what we believe about the role of these groups in the plan of God and the leadership of communities of faith, we must all admit that grave sin has been committed against them by our churches. We who are ministers and stewards of the gospel are so because we believe that the fundamental message of the gospel is a message of God's justice and righteousness; thus we must always check ourselves to see that we are faithful to that message.

An essential part of Hebrew and Christian tradition has always been *self-critique*. And here we come to a second insight inspired by Paul's doxology. "For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been the Lord's counselor?" Paul here echoes Isaiah 40. Who, indeed has known the mind of the Lord? We are part of a tradition whose faith seeks understanding, but, as Freda Gardner has written, "It is an illusion to say with finality what we're all about." We have been given wonderful tools for our seeking: our minds, the scriptures, traditions, our experience, and testimonies from one another. But we have not already attained understanding, and we must press on toward it. "A living tradition," says Alasdair McIntyre, "is an historically extended, socially embodied argument, and an argument precisely in part about the goods which constitute that tradition." Such an argument extends through many generations. Ezra and Nehemiah reflect the concerns of a people whose identity was besieged; the Book of Ruth highlights the outsider, apparently correcting for the painful overemphasis on boundaries and exclusiveness in the former writings. We read that Paul rebukes Peter for segregating from the gentiles; we see that James seems to correct an overemphasis on grace that has enervated people's good works.

Our tradition exposes and at times corrects for its own fallibility, provision-

ality, and not-yet-ness. And we in the church must expose and face what William Buie has so eloquently called our “piouses and our biases.” And, of course, God often speaks a renewing word in surprising ways and through unexpected sources.

Third, *lament*. I tussle a little with Paul on this third point (and on a few other points as well!). I claim that God invites our back talk, our lamentation. Paul doesn’t seem to help us on this in the doxology I’ve chosen as our scripture for today. Still borrowing from Isaiah, and perhaps Job, Paul is reinforcing the incomparable nature of God. He asks: “Or who has given a gift to God, to receive a gift in return?” Both Isaiah and Paul seem to imply that there is nothing we can give God in an exchange and that it would be presumptuous to come before God with anything but praise. Now, in one sense, this is indeed true. What could we give the Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer of the universe?

Yes, I tussle with Paul in suggesting that we talk back to our Creator, but Paul himself gives me the resources to do so. We need to keep in mind that Paul’s affirmation “O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!” comes after his heartrending and not fully satisfying struggle over the question of the relationship between Jews who do not believe in Jesus and gentiles who do. He has wrestled with God, searched the unsearchable, scrutinized the inscrutable, and, yes, even offered his gifts of lament to a God who seemingly needs no gifts. “I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart,” Paul says in Romans 9:2 concerning what he perceives to be the plight of the Jews. “I ask, then [who do you think he asked, if not God?], has God rejected God’s people?” His question in Romans 11:1 leaps urgently from the page. I can picture passionate and faithful Paul looking up to heaven and pleading, “God, have you rejected your people? Help me to understand this mess!”

We have a God who invites us to listen and to hear, but also to respond and to talk back. We have a God who welcomes our lament, our cries, and our wrestlings. I recently asked the junior high Sunday School class that I coteach, “If you could ask God just one question, what would it be?” Sometimes junior highers can be tight-lipped, but I got an outpouring of the most passionate and deep questions. Why are there poor people? Why doesn’t my father ever come to see me when he says he will? Why is there war? Why is my mother dying? Will you get mad at us if we ask these things? I felt during that session both sides of Paul’s passion. I had great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart for these kids in this world; and I praise the depth and riches of a God whose Spirit brooded in their midst and energized their questions.

Many times I have stood before God with all the accoutrements of my life stripped away. I don't make a secret of the fact that I regularly cry out to God and remind God of the promise of peace and justice put before us in Isaiah, a promise Jesus repeated in his inaugural sermon. That is part of the dark richness of my faith. And it is impelled by the deep well of hope from which we draw.

Fourth, *hope*. "For from God and through God and to God are all things." Hope is the darkest, richest, fullest colored level of our tradition. The people of God are realists and prophets, but theirs is a hopeful, yearning, visioning realism. We believe with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our minds, and with all our bodies that the God we worship, follow, and cry out to is a God who will someday reign in peace, justice, and righteousness. This belief gives us the kind of "restless determination" that Martin Luther King, Jr. described in a 1958 article on race relations that first appeared in *The Presbyterian Outlook*.

King noted that psychologists were (at that time) bandying about the concept "maladjusted." Every parent feared having her or his child diagnosed as maladjusted, for the term referred to those who could not adjust to the world as it was. King acknowledged that to a certain degree we must all live the well-adjusted life in order to avoid mental illness. "But there are some things in our social system to which all of us ought to be maladjusted," he exhorted. "I never intend to adjust myself to the evils of segregation and the crippling effects of discrimination. I never intend to adjust myself to the inequalities of an economic system which takes necessities from the masses to give luxuries to the classes. I never intend to become adjusted to the madness of militarism and the self-defeating method of physical violence." "It may be," he continued, "that the salvation of the world lies in the hands of the maladjusted. The challenge to us is to be maladjusted—as maladjusted as the prophet Amos, who in the midst of the injustices of his day, could cry out in words that echo across the centuries, 'Let judgement run down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.' " "Yes," said Martin Luther King, Jr., "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." Let us not be fooled; the longevity or uninterrupted practice of injustice does not make it righteous. It is not our call to say, "Well, it's been going on this long, so it must be right." It is rather our call to say with the psalmist, "How long, O Lord?" and to protest, "Too long, O Lord." This comes from our hope in a God who hears the cries of the people.

Complexity, self-critique, lament, and hope—a wondrously rich, dark, yes, at times, *scandalous* tradition. But there are blond wigs being pressed on our



God; wigs that obscure the dark, rich, deep nature of our God: the blond wig of a reduced theology that thins the truth; the blond wig of a triumphal theology that cannot correct itself; the blond wig of a bland and deluded monologue from God that silences our cries; the blond wig of a covert cynicism that adjusts itself hopelessly to the way things are. Let us take off the blond wig that obscures the richness and complexity of our God. When we see God being paraded in such ways, let us maladjusts give ourselves due credit if we do not recognize the dark, rich God of Jewish and Christian tradition beneath the wig.

“O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! . . . For from God and through God and to God are all things.” To God be the glory, the dark, rich, cool, and wondrous glory, forever and ever!

## M. M. Thomas: A Tribute

(MAY 15, 1916–DECEMBER 3, 1996)

by CHARLES C. WEST

*Charles C. West, the Stephen Colwell Professor of Christian Ethics Emeritus at Princeton Theological Seminary, delivered this memorial minute at the February 26, 1997 meeting of the Seminary faculty.*

BETWEEN 1980 and 1987 Madathiparampil Mammen Thomas, known to almost everyone as M. M., was for a semester in each of six years a guest professor of ethics, mission, and ecumenics at Princeton Theological Seminary. It was just before the John A. Mackay Chair in World Christianity was established; otherwise, he would certainly have been its first incumbent. He taught such courses as *The Gospel in a Pluralistic World*; *The Church in Mission and Unity*; *Christian Social Ethics in Asian Perspective*; and, above all, *The Ecumenical Movement: Its Past, Its Present, and Its Future*. To say that he taught these subjects is, however, hardly adequate. He *was* the ecumenical movement in our midst. He embodied the world church in mission and, through his teaching presence, made us a part of it.

M. M. Thomas was born May 15, 1916 to a devout Mar Thoma Christian family in Kerala, south India. In that church, with its Syrian Orthodox liturgical tradition and its evangelical piety, his christocentric spirituality first took form. It was the beginning of a lifelong adventure, a living encounter with Hindu faith and practice, especially that of Gandhi, on the one side and with Communist commitment and ideology on the other. At one point in his youth, he applied for ordination in the Mar Thoma Church and for membership in the Communist Party. The Church rejected him because of the Marxist leanings of his social ethics; the Party rejected him because of his Christian faith. As it has turned out, the Communists were right and the Church was mistaken. He became, with only a college degree, a self-educated theologian, in later life a dialogue partner with the major Christian scholars of his day. At the same time his social ethics, though deeply committed to the struggle of the poor for justice and humanity, broke sharply with the total claim of Marxist-Leninist ideology and Communist policy. But the heart of his ministry was ecumenical study and action, where spirituality, theology, ideology, and social conscience met in Christian witness to a world in revolution.

The vehicle of this ministry was the ecumenical movement, in India and abroad. M. M. was first secretary of the Youth Christian Council of Action in his native Kerala, then Student Christian Movement secretary in Madras, and Youth Secretary of the Mar Thoma Church. From 1947 to 1952 he served on

the staff of the World Student Christian Federation in Geneva, with a special emphasis on Christian political witness. He took part in planning the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1948 and in the formation of the Council's Department of Church and Society, of which he became an active member and chairman from 1961 to 1968. In this capacity he also chaired the World Conference on Church and Society at Geneva in 1966. From 1968 to 1975 he served as Chairman of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches itself, guiding it through some of the stormiest years of its history. Through the power of his thought, the breadth of his vision, and the genius of his diplomacy, he influenced the mind and policy of the ecumenical movement more than any other person save its architect, W. A. Visser 't Hooft. The honorary doctorate conferred on him by the University of Uppsala in 1978 was a belated recognition of the status he had already earned.

The centerpiece of M. M. Thomas' work was, however, in India itself. Returning from Geneva in 1952, he threw himself into social work and joined with India's leading theologian, P. D. Devanandan, in 1957 to form the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, which he served first as Associate Director and then, upon Devanandan's death, as Director until his retirement in 1976. Over these years the Institute poured out literature for the guidance of both church and society in India on social policy, cultural encounter, Christian-Hindu relations, political analysis, family problems, and ecumenical affairs. This literature was usually the product of study groups composed of some of the best minds of India, working intensely to produce something close to a consensus report, which was then edited and published under the names of Thomas and Devanandan. We will never know how much of these reports was M. M.'s own work. He plowed his genius into the common process and made it fruitful. This did not prevent him, however, from producing a large and diverse literature of his own, in his native Malayalam and in English, on themes as diverse as *Man in the Universe of Faiths*, *Secular Ideologies and the Secular Meaning of Christ*, *The Christian Response to the Asian Revolution*, *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance*, meditations on *The Realization of the Cross*, and a series of Bible studies for the church in Kerala. It also did not prevent him from opposing, at serious risk of arrest and imprisonment, Indira Gandhi's suspension of democracy in 1976. This led indirectly to his appointment as governor of the largely Christian state of Nagaland in northeast India in 1991, a post in which he was as much pastor as official until his resignation in 1993, in protest against central government corruption.

M. M. Thomas came to Princeton as a guest professor after his retirement from the Christian Institute. His contacts with the Seminary, however, are older and newer than this. In earlier years he sent two of his colleagues, E.V. Mathew and Saral Chatterjee, to study here on visiting fellowships. Over the years he has recommended many other students for our consideration, most recently from the Christian student fellowship that has had, and still has, its headquarters in his Thiruvalla, Kerala home. At the time of his death on December 3, 1996, he was actively promoting a three-year research project on mission and evangelism in India, for which he had recruited as advisers two members of the Princeton Seminary faculty. The ecumenical ministry that was his is ours as well. He was for a while our teacher and our friend. He remains our inspiration and our challenge.



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**E. DAVID WILLIS**

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## BOOK REVIEWS

Tisdale, Leonora Tubbs. *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997. Pp. xiv + 175. \$16.00.

This book explores the communal nature of preaching. Sermons are not merely the verbal utterances of preachers. They are events in the life of particular congregations and are processed through the local culture of the people who receive them. Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, Associate Professor of Preaching and Worship at Princeton Theological Seminary, shows us how to draw upon that local culture in developing sermons that are an effective expression of the gospel for the people we serve. She employs a range of theological and social-science disciplines to develop methods for performing exegesis of a congregation's symbol systems, values, preferred modes of discourse, historical identity and the characteristic local theologies that emerge through these factors. She uses case study and theory to demonstrate how an effective sermon is one that is "imaginable within the particular social world a people inhabit."

The book provides new preachers a healthy grounding in the communal nature of what happens when they release a sermon into the air, how it will never be fully in their control but will be received and processed through systems of meaning and consciousness far larger than the preacher's own. When a congregation's response baffles the novice preacher, there is often a tendency to consider what was spoken without giving attention to the cultural transaction that took place in the congregation. Tisdale provides a larger framework for understanding the complexity of a congregation's receptivity or resistance to our sermons by placing them in the living context of how the community believes, acts, thinks, and communicates.

The book is as useful to experienced pastors as to beginners. It names what wise preachers have long intuited, namely, the uniqueness of each congregation, and it describes specific ways to achieve a more precise reading of the congregation as a social organism. This congregational sensitivity fits well with the increased attention that pastoral theology is giving nowadays to systems theory: the way any discreet action—in this case a sermon—is best understood not in isolation but in its relationship to the sum total of all that interacts with it. Such a contextual approach saves us from silly homiletical debates about what is the "best" homiletic (e.g., story telling or rhetorical argument or exposition). Instead, we come to see how the differing local cultures of congregations require different approaches.

There is also in Tisdale's sophisticated analysis of congregations a redefinition of the nature of homiletical authority, one in which the preacher does not so much stand above the people as with them, helping to identify the yearnings and beliefs that mark their individual and corporate life and to build from these a theology that is true to the church's calling and identity. Hence, preaching is a kind of folk art, and preachers, like other artisans, work with the materials of their immediate environment, creating things that reflect the ethos of their community.

One particularly appealing quality of the book is the autobiographical section on Tisdale's early days of preaching, when she first became aware of how different congregations respond to the same sermon in very different ways. There is a fresh, unguarded tone to these stories that rings with the sound of lived experience. Her initial efforts in the pulpit led step-by-step to her growing awareness of the congregation as a complex system. Through her personal story she models the very process that she is teaching us—experience that awakens reflection, which in turn stirs a pursuit of deeper knowledge, which results in more effective preaching.

Preachers will recognize in these pages dynamics that they have known in their own ministries. And they will give thanks for the hard-earned, practical insights Tisdale shares.

Thomas H. Troeger  
Iliff School of Theology

McClure, John S. *The Roundtable Pulpit: Where Leadership and Preaching Meet*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995. Pp. 127. \$14.95.

John McClure, Professor of Preaching and Worship at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, is advocating collaborative preaching. The roundtable conversation he proposes may look, at first glance, like a familiar exercise to many who consider weekly preaching texts with congregation members or local ministers. What McClure is proposing, however, is not your typical "what do you think of this text" session. Rather, McClure is suggesting a transformation in leadership style, from a vertical one where the preacher maintains all the power to a horizontal one where the whole people of God engages in the preaching ministry.

The method of the roundtable is to consider topics, concerns, questions, interpretations, and practices that are generated by their mutual study of an upcoming preaching text. The matters that are generated by the roundtable

are not just food for thought for the preacher. The roundtable is not merely the occasion for the preacher to hear the perspectives of others; nor is the discussion designed to prime the pump for Thursday's sermon writing. Rather, the preacher is committed to the roundtable for the stuff of the sermon.

The yield of the roundtable conversation becomes the stuff of the sermon in order that the sermon may become a communal word. The roundtable conversation becomes for the preacher a radical exercise in listening. The goal is to empower the community of God's people to participate in the leadership and the carrying out of Christ's ministry as it is led by the scriptures.

The challenge of McClure's system is that it requires the preacher to let go of the solo act to which so many are accustomed. It requires a commitment to the voice of the community. The preacher must continue to be the learned scholar, biblically and theologically, in order that the sermonic word remain faithful to both scripture and theological tradition, but the hermeneutic goes from private domain to public.

In the early chapters McClure sets out his theoretical base for the roundtable pulpit. While the method chapters can stand on their own and the theory chapters may be skipped, I suggest the theory chapters be carefully read for the way they challenge the preacher to consider the whole of pastoral ministry. The method chapters give step-by-step instructions for how to start up a roundtable discussion group, suggestions for its continuing viability—this is not a six- or eight-week exercise—and concrete examples for how to translate what is generated at the roundtable into the material of the sermon.

McClure designed this book to be highly practical, and it is. While one does not need the theory or theological foundation to initiate or profit from roundtable conversations as proposed by McClure, I hope he will follow with more theological reflection on the implications and consequences of long-term roundtable conversations for our understanding of the role of the preacher in the Reformed tradition. The case might be made that designs such as the roundtable fulfill the Reformed tradition. If so, I would like to see McClure make that case.

The roundtable pulpit is not for the fainthearted. It is an exciting model, however, for those who want to revitalize, or generate for the first time, congregational participation in the preaching ministry of the whole church.

Nancy Lammers Gross  
Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary

Kee, Howard Clark, and Irvin J. Borowsky, eds. *Removing Anti-Judaism from the Pulpit*. Philadelphia: American Interfaith Institute; New York: Continuum, 1996. Pp. 140. \$19.95.

This book represents the work of the sixth symposium on Jewish-Christian relations sponsored by the Philadelphia-based American Interfaith Institute. In the foreword, Institute Chairman and co-editor Irvin J. Borowsky states the problem succinctly: "In most editions of the New Testament, the Jews are presented as 'the people who killed Jesus'; a people to be despised for all eternity. It is this portrait that is the genesis of the anti-Jewish poison that has been passed down from generation to generation."

The church was engaged in "teaching contempt" for the Jews for at least eighteen centuries before the Holocaust, but the Holocaust made self-searching and repentance inescapable for Christians. Or did it? Harry James Cargas, professor of religion at Webster University in St. Louis, notes that, in the more than two thousand homilies he heard in Catholic churches throughout the United States since the end of World War II, none dealt with Jewish-Christian relations. Yet, Cargas reminds us, "probably every killer in the Shoah . . . was a baptized Christian!" Therefore, if we do not deal with the Holocaust *as Christians*, we are "in danger of being post-Holocaust accomplices."

In the first essay, bearing the same title as the book, Martin E. Marty, one of nine Protestant contributors, highlights the age-old dilemma presented by New Testament passages that "teach contempt" for Jews and have had devastating consequences for them. Phrased most briefly, the dilemma is: "to expurgate or to annotate?" Marty casts a resounding vote for annotating. We need to help our people deal with the offending texts *in context*—to show them that harsh words for *some* Jews *then* were not meant to apply to *all* Jews even then and were certainly not meant to apply to *any* Jews generations, centuries, later. Other essays, for instance, "Interpreting Difficult Texts," by Clark M. Williamson and Ronald J. Allen, and "Preaching the Gospel without Anti-Judaism," by Fredrick C. Holmgren, give example after example of how to take the poison out of key New Testament texts—with hermeneutical integrity.

The symposium's focus on its primary subject, removing anti-Judaism *from the pulpit*, is greatly strengthened by the inclusion of sermons by two Catholic women editors and three distinguished Protestant preachers ("The Root That Supports Us," by Wallace M. Allston, Jr., "Resurrection, the Holocaust, and Forgiveness: A Sermon for Eastertime," by Stanley Hauerwas, and "Jews and Christians: All in the Family," by William H. Willimon). These samples



of what *can* be done from the pulpit to replace contempt with understanding and respect are so helpful that one wishes for a book-length anthology of such sermons and sermon outlines—perhaps in a subsequent volume in the series.

Since Vatican II's *Nostra Aetate*, nearly all the major Christian communions have published statements disavowing the theology of "supersession" (i.e., the claim that the New Testament supersedes the Old), hailing Judaism as a living religion, and expressing penitence for what Christians, subtly poisoned by misread and misapplied New Testament texts, have done or allowed to be done to Jews. It is to the great credit of this symposium that it proposes to communicate this change of mind and heart to the men and women in the pews by building a fire under the men and women in the pulpit.

Two mildly critical comments: First, a few essays by Jewish authors would have been in order. Some of the most relevant and most colorful comments in the book come from their ranks, for example, Abraham Heschel's reaction to attempts at evangelizing Jews: "I had rather enter Auschwitz than be an object of conversion." Second, I think I can hear some of the debate that preceded the choice of the expression "anti-Judaism," but I would have voted for "anti-Semitism." The subject is overwhelmingly important. Let's make sure that *everyone* understands what it is!

John R. Bodo  
San Rafael, CA

Bassett, Joseph A. *Theology for Pew and Pulpit: The Everlasting Song*. Shippensburg, PA: Ragged Edge Press, 1996. Pp. 184. \$24.95.

For many years this reviewer regularly, on the Lord's Day, betook himself, with anticipation, to a small church of congregational polity in a Boston suburb, Chestnut Hill, for a fairly simple service of morning prayer and sermon. Students and friends would often express surprise at such a choice by one who was thought by them to be something of a "high church Presbyterian" (if not something worse). The response to this surprise was always along these lines: What more could I ask for than some of the best Calvinist, lectionary-based preaching in New England, a discreet version of *The Book of Common Prayer* ("Anglicanism without frills"), beautifully done music by a well-trained quartet and employing a delightful small tracker-action pipe organ, sensitively chosen and accompanied hymns, and a literate if also restrained small congregation of genteel people?

The pastor in this place, for over twenty-five years now, is the author of this profound volume of truly pastoral theology, Joseph A. Bassett, graduate of

Williams College, Harvard Divinity School, and the University of Notre Dame (in liturgical studies). He has written an eminently readable and thoughtful book of careful musical and theological reflection concerning his pastorate, a book that will warm many a pastor's heart with its wise delineation of the ways of the faithful, in and out of worship, and of the wisdom of many an ecclesiastical tradition, particularly that of Calvinism and of New England Congregationalism. The three classic touchstones of this disciplined meditation on pastoral ministry are John Calvin; Edward Taylor (1671-1725), minister of Westfield, Massachusetts and one of the era's most accomplished poets; and Samuel Sewall (1652-1717), Harvard roommate of Taylor and Precentor at Old South Meeting House, whose diaries Bassett has thoroughly mined.

In each chapter Bassett describes a significant moment in his parish's liturgical life, employing some particular portion of its liturgy, and then comments on this moment as both pastor and theologian, particularly from the perspective of its implicit and explicit pneumatology in the wider context of trinitarian thought, concluding with what he calls "a running conversation with Edward Taylor." As the subtitle of the book suggests, the poetic aesthetic is always paired with a musical theme, constantly returning to a leitmotif stated simply at the end of chapter 1: "They all enter the sanctuary while the prelude is being played, slip into a pew and take their place in the chorus of God's people." These "moments" so described are the Word, baptism, Christmas, Lent, Easter, and, most movingly, Bassett's weekly ministry in the chapel and corridors of Boston's famed Children's Hospital.

A recurring theme is Bassett's careful analysis of liturgical/theological language in terms of a delineation of four forms of analogy: improper proportion, proper proportion, intrinsic attribution, and extrinsic attribution. This is particularly helpful in his discussion of the trinitarian formula in the chapter on baptism. Bassett also regularly reminds his reader of the Calvinist "theocentric" way of thinking and worshiping: "One benefit of mentioning the Virgin Mary in the communion prayer (at Christmas Eve) is to make the point that human nature is not solely responsible for the baby Jesus. As the Word of God, the Person of Christ is not even the product of human and divine cooperation. The Word being sent into the Virgin's womb serves as a reminder that the initiative of Christmas is extrinsic to humanity. The holy initiative stays with God."

At least one further thread running through these chapters can be identified as a clear Calvinist sensitivity to the histories of humanity and its societies. Constant reference is made to the ways in which Christian community and its

liturgies provide leaven and relief from the banalities, busyness, violence, and cynicism of much of secular life. At one point, commenting on a classic Easter prayer, Bassett notes, "After the carnage of the first half of the twentieth century this generation is able to better appreciate the extraordinary forces that threaten humanity. To hear in a communion prayer that Christ has overcome those forces on Easter is indeed good news."

At the end of the concluding chapter, on ministry to the sick and dying, there is an extensive commentary on the Lord's Prayer, obviously in the form and style of classic sixteenth-century confessions and catechisms, and then some meditations on death, grief, and healing. Anyone who has turned to Bassett at such times can almost say many of the lines of these last pages with him: "The process [of grief] takes at least one year, with all of its anniversaries and holidays. For those who come to church through Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter, there will come a Sunday, when, with Samuel Miller, they discern a glory, '... not gross or flamboyant, but quite sufficient to sustain our courage and enable us to sing despite our tears.'"

From a grateful reader's point of view, this book's only deficiency is its brevity. But from another point of view, this is probably also one of its excellences. As a much more prolific Calvinist writer, Karl Barth, once observed about his voluminous *Church Dogmatics*, the purpose of it is not to make us "Barthians" but to make the rest of us theologians. *Theology for Pew and Pulpit* just might make better theologians of the rest of us pastors.

Horace T. Allen, Jr.

Boston University School of Theology

Meilaender, Gilbert. *Bioethics: A Primer for Christians*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996. Pp. xi + 120. \$10.00.

Gilbert Meilaender's *Bioethics: A Primer for Christians* qualifies as a "primer," but not in the sense of a superficial first take, which beginners will eventually shelve in favor of a richer account of the subject's complexities. His primer gets down to first things, and first things to which one must continually return, while thinking through such vexing issues as abortion, genetic advances, prenatal screening, suicide, euthanasia, and refusing treatment. That's quite a range of topics for a short book of 118 pages, but Meilaender manages to honor his subject with rich rewards alike for the beginner and the surfeited professional in bioethics.

The book begins with a ten-page statement of the "Christian Vision," itself a model of brevity. That vision shapes the whole of the book. However, in

clarifying particular arenas of practice, Meilaender also throws light back on the vision itself. The book moves forward and backward, enriching our sense of things in both directions as it proceeds.

Many books in bioethics have simply turned on a green light. Their authors have supplied after-the-fact rationalizations for doing what technological advances have already made possible. Other bioethicists have posted warnings with an amber light, which temporarily slows down the traffic (for example, in recombinant DNA and fetal tissue research), but soon they wave the traffic on with a green. However, Meilaender, in this and other books, is prepared to post a red light. He can say "No" and attempts to offer Christian warrants for saying "No," not indiscriminately and opaquely, but nevertheless firmly.

His chapter on "Procreation versus Reproduction" argues for a Christian "No" to artificial insemination, in vitro fertilization and surrogate motherhood insofar as they involve third parties, on the grounds that these parties separate conjugal love from procreation and they tend to confuse procreating with reproducing, parenting with manufacturing. His following chapter, on abortion, also says "No," on the grounds that we are ensouled bodies, "animated earth," to use Saint Augustine's term, across the full "natural trajectory of life," from our early adventures as fetuses to the twilight years when the lamp grows dim. Meilaender, however, concedes exceptions to the general Christian prohibition against abortion in those cases in which the "mother's life is threatened by continued pregnancy or in which the presence of the fetus [though formally innocent] embodies, so to speak, a continuation of the attack the woman has suffered [through rape or incest]." His phrase "a continuation of the attack" more powerfully expresses the grounds for the exception than can be found in the writings of those who are categorically pro-choice.

On the subject of genetic advance, Meilaender offers discriminate judgments of "Yes" and "No." He gives a cautious "Yes" to somatic cell therapy, that is, a selective "Yes" to therapy intended to remove the negative of a disease but a "No" to performance-driven, positive efforts to enhance capacities, for example, the intellectual capacities of a child that might help get her into Harvard. He also criticizes the dangerous hybris behind all efforts at germ cell therapy, which would bypass actual human beings to alter, through the germ line, generations to come.

Meilaender, as might be surmised, also opposes euthanasia and assisted suicide. Proponents of both seek compulsively to minimize or eliminate suffering, as though suffering were the ultimate evil against which humanity alone, not God, has resource. For Christians, "The governing imperative



should be, not 'minimize' suffering, but 'maximize care,' " a care that sooner or later, after all has been reasonably done to relieve distress, must take the form of compassion, that is, a suffering with.

While opposing euthanasia and suicide, however, Meilaender would not deny to the patient the right to refuse treatment, a refusal that he carefully distinguishes from suicide. Many bioethicists would dissolve into one another the practices of euthanasia, assisted suicide, and refusal of treatment and give the go-ahead to all three. But Meilaender carefully distinguishes the several practices and clarifies the rough terrain through which all of us someday may need to walk.

Meilaender has honored his readers—and let there be pastors, teachers, students, laypeople, and authors among them—with a wise, richly textured, and enduring piece of work.

William F. May  
Southern Methodist University

Shinn, Roger Lincoln. *The New Genetics: Challenges for Science, Faith, and Politics*. Wakefield, RI: Moyer Bell, 1996. Pp. 175. \$22.95.

No one has been at the center of the church's engagement with genetics as much as Roger Shinn, and few understand as well as he the promise and the perils of this new power. Through his teaching at Union Theological Seminary, where he is the Reinhold Niebuhr Professor of Social Ethics Emeritus, and through his leadership in denominational and ecumenical bodies worldwide, Shinn has helped to define the church's response to genetics as one of cautious optimism.

At the same time, Shinn has projected the voice of the church into the public arena. This role is reflected in *The New Genetics*, which is not only about genetics but about how we as a society *decide* about genetics and how the church should help. This is a book with two purposes: It is a contribution to public ethical theory and a reflection on the future uses of genetics.

The second purpose dominates. In clear and readable language, Shinn summarizes the state of genetics research in the mid-1990s. The Human Genome Project, funded by the United States government with international and private cosponsors, is quickly finding the chromosomal location of all human genes, as well as all the genes of several other species. Already, efforts are underway to sequence these genes, that is, to find their precise internal structure, a step that is critical to understanding how they function or malfunction.



Such research, Shinn notes, is already shedding light—and heat—on how we see ourselves. To what extent is human behavior determined by the genes we inherit? Are mental abilities, as measured for example by an IQ test, established at conception? Do different racial groups, *as groups*, have a differing genetic basis for intelligence, crime, or other broad traits? In a superb discussion of Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray's *The Bell Curve*, Shinn points out how genetics itself, with its insistence upon the powerful role played by environmental factors of all sorts, undermines the conclusions that some draw. Genes simply do not determine who we are, nor does the science of genetics eliminate "the elusive but powerful reality of freedom."

Genetics will bring us new powers in medicine. But as Shinn carefully observes, it is not always clear where healing ends and where enhancing or even distorting begins. At the same time, Shinn refuses to romanticize nature, which, he observes, "has its destructive side" and should be regarded with awe and love "tinged with apprehension." But even nature's destructiveness (of a genetic disease, for example) is rooted in what must be valued, namely, genetic diversity. Human genetic intervention is therefore permitted but must be restrained.

Restraint is especially needed when it comes to genetic alterations that will be passed to subsequent generations, or "germ-line" alterations. Shinn rightly notes that this is the crucial issue for the future and observes that some church statements do *not* flatly oppose it, opting instead for a public, reflective process.

But how (returning now to the book's first purpose) does ethics inform public policy on matters of genetics? While fully aware of the fragmentation of modern culture, Shinn observes that, in fact, ethical discourse does occur in the public setting and often attains widespread agreement. Three forces, Shinn argues, interact unpredictably in the forming of public policy. These forces are "human values and faiths, scientific information and concepts, and political activity." Religious communities can and should be actively persuasive in this interaction, first by posing unmasking questions, but also by "advocat[ing] their ethical convictions."

As genetics advances rapidly, with human cloning and germ-line experimentation on the horizon, Shinn's book provides an illuminating resource to help church leaders understand the power of genetics and a compelling manifesto for their engagement in public policy.

Ronald Cole-Turner  
Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

Coles, Robert, comp. *In God's House: Children's Drawings*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996. Pp. 32. \$15.00.

What happens when impoverished, abused, neglected, and otherwise at-risk children describe God and heaven? Rather than certainty and intimacy, their portraits with crayons and words convey a longing, and sometimes even fear.

*In God's House: Children's Drawings* is presented with a foreword by Robert Coles. A pediatrician and psychiatrist who has faithfully interpreted the spiritual aspirations of children for us before, Coles has met many children around the world like these little ones. In their pictures Coles sees a God who offers at-risk children the possibility that their lives can change. "Picture after picture and statement after statement," Cole says, point to where God is, where God lives, and convey that in God's home children can find "freedom, beauty, plentiful food, great strength, love, and, not least, a 'place' where moral distinctions are made and where they count—a kind of justice, that is."

Perhaps the eleven-year-old who sketches God's house as a building with windows and doors like the features of a face has experienced homelessness himself. "I'll try to find a home for [God]," Colin offers. To this lad, whose home for God has windows like eyes, trim like a nose, and a door like a mouth, you cannot find God someplace. "His church is everyone."

Nine-year-old Josephine pictures God on a throne high above earth but linked to creation by beneficent sunny rays. "But remember," she warns us about this distant God, "He told us we have to look after ourselves. That's important, you know."

In a jacket endorsement, the magazine *Sojourners* praises the lack of dialogue and commentary in the book. Here, I cannot agree. I want to hear more of twelve-year-old Carl's story, why he was scared to draw God's house as a big castle, and why with Jesus standing there, Carl found God's house a scary place. I want to hear Coles interact with twelve-year-old Sarah and draw out of her why the curious juxtaposition of heaven and hell in picture and words. What I miss most in these pages is the voice of someone who heeded Josephine's warning about looking after these children and each other.

Perhaps the editors intended to leave people like you and me disturbed enough to enter deeper into the lives of at-risk children, to learn what they have to teach us about God's presence in the midst of suffering and pain.

Diane Komp  
Yale University School of Medicine

Hoffman, Patricia L. *AIDS and the Sleeping Church*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995. Pp. xvi + 109. \$13.00.

Patricia L. Hoffman's *AIDS and the Sleeping Church* chronicles five months of visiting patients in Unit 500, the AIDS ward, at the Daniel Freeman Marina Hospital in Los Angeles. A Presbyterian laywoman, active in social justice causes for many years, Hoffman recognized it was time in her life to turn to something else. Having many gay and lesbian friends burdened with losses attributed to AIDS, she became a volunteer visitor for AIDS Project Los Angeles. She has translated her diary and personal reflections into a moving account of the struggles of men confined to the hospital with opportunistic diseases leading to decreasing strength and eventually to death.

Books on AIDS take many forms. Some are diaries written by persons living with AIDS. In others, family members describe the illness and loss of one dear to them. Books on meditation, not to mention ones based on scientific analyses of the disease and the "how-to-stay-fit" manuals for those infected, flood the market these days. Hoffman's journal is different. Description of the disease is not the central focus, yet the physical wasting is not ignored. Psychological analysis is not an intentional aim, but psychological reactions are necessary as Hoffman comes to know the patients. This is not a theological treatise, yet theology is at the heart of it. It is theology in action. It certainly is no training manual on hospital visitation, although a broad approach to visitation becomes apparent.

Life stories, each with its individual color and pattern, are woven into a seamless tapestry. The population of the unit keeps changing. Some are discharged only to return; others never go home. As Hoffman becomes more at ease in her volunteer role, each patient takes on an individual personality as she moves beyond surface chatter. The impact of the disease becomes more real and more frightening as the book progresses. The impressions are cumulative as Hoffman makes recurring visits. New threads appear in the tapestry; it takes on a richness.

One patient in particular becomes a good friend. He becomes a catalyst for Hoffman. So many of her own feelings surface as they talk. His roller-coaster emotions evoke counterresponses in her of anger, frustration, helplessness, and love. It becomes more difficult for her as his illness progresses. Through him we discover who she is. His story becomes her story. The reader, then, discovers that her story becomes the reader's story, compelling us to face ourselves. We are challenged to explore questions we have not dared to ask ourselves before. How can I minister lovingly to people in distress? How do I feel about homosexuality, and how can I move beyond the stereotypes

common in our culture? What does God have to do with the AIDS tragedy? What does death mean and how am I going to meet it?

As I became engrossed in this book, I began to wonder why Hoffman had titled her book *AIDS and the Sleeping Church*. Very little is said about the church in the early passages. A one-sentence comment in the introduction provided a passing reference to the church's role. "Since the church was on the sidelines of the epidemic, my involvement was as an AIDS Project Los Angeles (APLA) hospital volunteer." At one point, while participating in a memorial service in an apartment, she felt "a wave of anger" come over her. "I was thinking, where is the church that people are having to arrange memorial services in their apartments and homes?" It is not until her concluding reflections, written five years later, that she meets that question head on. She provides startling statistics on the growing impact of the disease and comments, "As you reflect on this journal I hope that it will help to put faces on the statistics." Hoffman challenges the church to become involved. The AIDS crisis reminds us of our sexuality and passion, she notes. It "invites us as individuals and as the church to break through our tidy illusions of who we are." The ministry of Jesus calls us to drop our illusions and follow him wherever he leads. The church does have the gifts and resources to minister to those in need in the AIDS community.

Hoffman's journal is a rich commentary on the human condition. It clearly helps us find our way in ministry. God's presence comes alive through us as we become a presence to another. She refers to Thomas Merton, the Trappist monk, who wrote, "I must look for my identity . . . not only in God but in other people. I will never be able to find myself if I isolate myself from the rest of humankind as if I were a different kind of being." Hoffman's book helps us to find God and ourselves in the lives of others.

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Keck, David. *Forgetting Whose We Are: Alzheimer's Disease and the Love of God*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996. Pp. 255. \$19.95.

Any theologian or physician who reads David Keck's *Forgetting Whose We Are* will likely react as I did: "I wish I had said that." This profound book merits careful reading, defies scanning, and requires a theological/philosophical background, along with some familiarity with the Old and New Testaments.



Such phrases as "He remembers his children" and "This do in remembrance of me" indicate that *memory* in the Bible goes far beyond recall and is fundamental to worship. Keck portrays Alzheimer's as *the theological disease*. Memory is not only closely identified with whatever we are but is tied in with our response to God. Alzheimer's victims, as they become deprived of the ability to know and remember (as well as to accrue and sort memories), are unable to worship or pray. Alzheimer's is a long and drawn out process of whatever we perceive death to be. It dismantles the personality and all that partakes of the spiritual. Actual death is only the completion of the physical residuum in that process.

Keck explains that taking care of an Alzheimer's patient is difficult, frustrating, and angering, because early there is no reasoning, and finally, not even a response. It is a disease without hope for the patient or for the caregiver, who becomes weary of well-doing. Both may be overcome with guilt at repressed feelings and feel increasingly alone, unless there is some answer to the eternal question, "Is there any word from the Lord," whether through a person, a congregation, or the church itself. Keck sees resurrection hope as God's answer to Alzheimer's dissolution of the mind/soul as well as to the death and decay of the body. Perhaps Alzheimer's is so painful to watch because it is a seemingly endless day-to-day experience with the process of dying, seen in a person who finally has no spiritual resources or insight.

Keck (whose mother has Alzheimer's) says, "When I contemplate the dissolution of my mother's memories and the apparent disintegration of her person, I want to hear all about the resurrection." Just as the disciples learned from the first resurrection, so our contemplation of resurrection may bring about new understandings of bereavement. The chapter on "Death and Resurrection" deals with: (1) the fundamental teachings of the church concerning resurrection; (2) how the resurrection is crucial for understanding caregiving; (3) what the church can and ought to be saying about dying and death (reminding us that Christ died a slow and agonizing death, not dissimilar to many who die in nursing homes, "despised and rejected"); and (4) dying and death from the perspective of the caregiver, whom resurrection hope alone can fortify.

In "The Caregiver as Christian Poet," Keck deals with the longing of caregivers for feeling and intimations of the beautiful. "Because of their heightened awareness of the real ugliness which does exist, they appreciate and desire the opposite all the more." He points out that all of us, "in some degree or another, are afflicted with the trials of Alzheimer's." As sinners, we are patients, cognitively impaired, needing help, and in danger of becoming,



like full-time caregivers, people without the leisure to feel at home in the gifts of creation. Consequently, our souls may not be properly tuned to resonate with notes of beauty. He goes on in the next chapter to equate the kind of love expressed by the caregiver with "agapic" love. Alzheimer's patients require from us love that cannot be returned or rewarded. Our solitary reward is the realization that we too are mortal and may fall into this malady ourselves, which may be the only way that we can understand what it means to be sinners, dependent not upon what we are but upon how we are seen in the eyes of a gracious and forgiving God.

Some caregivers will appreciate the information and insights of this book, but its greatest use will be among those in pastoral care, primary-care medicine, neurology, gerontology, and psychiatry, who seek to comfort and encourage these caregivers. For further reading, two excellent and practical books dealing specifically with Alzheimer's disease are: *Florida Caregivers Handbook*, 237 pages, from Healthtrac Books, PO Box 13599, Tallahassee, FL 32317 (\$12.95 + \$2.00 shipping and handling + sales tax for Florida residents) and *Caring for the Caregiver*, 171 pages, generously made available by Parke-Davis (a limited number of copies are available without charge by writing the reviewer at 847 South Newport Avenue, Tampa, FL 33606).

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Robb, Nigel J. *A Time to Die and a Time to Live: A Guidebook for Those Who Care for the Grieving*. St. Andrews, Scotland: Blake Publications, 1996. Pp. 186. £9.95.

Nigel Robb, who is Lecturer in Practical Theology and Christian Ethics at Scotland's University of St. Andrews, spent the 1995-96 academic year as a visiting scholar at Princeton Seminary studying the literature of grief, bereavement, and loss. The result of his labor is the publication of this brief manual of pastoral care, which is designed to assist and inform ministers and laypersons who hope to comfort the grief-stricken.

After a very short chapter on biblical and theological ideas about death, Robb explores, in a longer section, the psychological needs of dying people and the emotional aspects of grief. He gives special attention to the topic of children and death, both the grief experienced *by* children who have lost a loved one and the grief felt *over* children, the overpowering sorrow of parents and others when a child dies. The final section of the book takes Robb's

insights about grief in the face of death and extends them to other losses (such as divorce and unemployment). A helpful set of appendices includes reviews of two major books (Elizabeth Kübler-Ross' *On Death and Dying* and Ernest Becker's *The Denial of Death*), a sample "In Case of Death" data form, and a table summarizing some of the major aspects of the "grief process."

Robb has written a thoughtful and compassionate book, one that makes a contribution less by the force of its originality and more by the patient and clear way he instructs his readers about the basics of caring for bereaved people. Indeed, the individual chapters, written in a succinct, sometimes even telegraphic, style, seem designed as information checklists and discussion starters for bereavement-care training sessions.

The "theme song" of this book is the familiar refrain that the strong feelings of grief "are healthy, normal and a part of the healing process" and that the attempts of well-meaning but misinformed people to get the bereaved to bottle up their emotions only make matters worse, often leading to delayed and more intense grief, physical illness, or even death. This idea, gleaned from clinical psychology and elevated to near proverbial status in much of the therapeutic literature on grief, seems true enough and no doubt is a point worth emphasizing in a primer such as this book. One wonders, though, whether the restorative value of free-flowing grief is an idea that should go entirely unquestioned in a theological work, especially given the current North American cultural context.

To be sure, Robb begins this book with a discussion of the theology of death, but it seems by its brevity to serve more as background for the real action, which is psychological. But when Paul spoke to the Thessalonians about death, his purpose was "so you may not grieve as others do who have no hope" (1 Thess. 4:13). The implication is not that Christians do not feel deeply the pain of loss but rather that the human experience of grief is somehow transformed and given new content by the gospel hope. Does the Christian faith make possible a grieving that is no less honest but still different from the sort called for by therapists? That is not an easy question to answer, but it worth serious consideration.

Nevertheless, one must not overly complain here; *A Time to Die and a Time to Live* is a manual for beginners, a clear and helpful one at that, and not the place to untie all the knots in pastoral care.

Thomas G. Long  
Bordentown, NJ

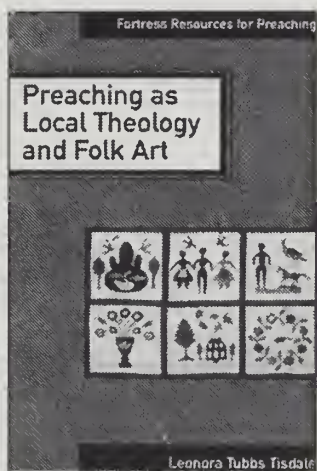
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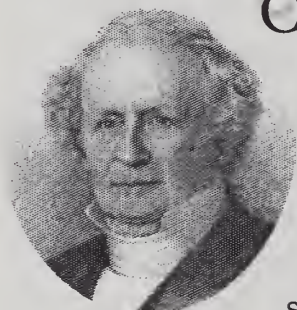


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